



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

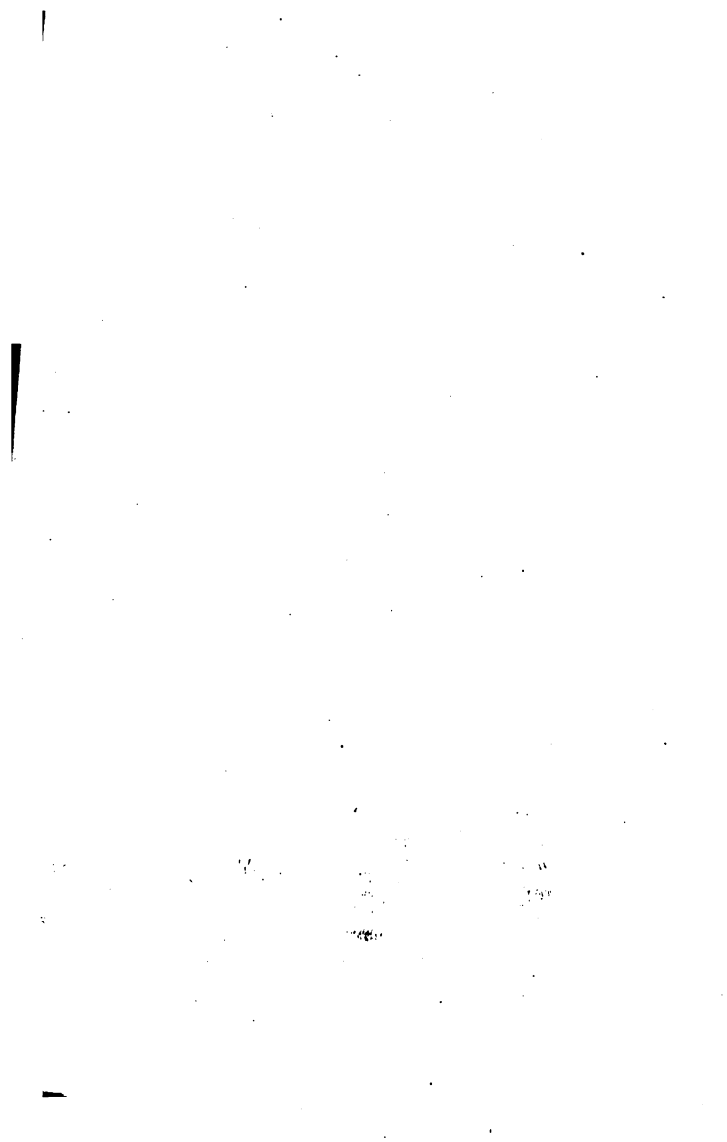
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

MIRACLES
OF
HEAVENLY LOVE
IN
DAILY LIFE
BY
AGOSTE



600057705U









100

100



THE WANDERER'S RETURN.



G. NELSON & SONS
LONDON EDINBURGH AND NEW YORK



THE WANDERER'S RETURN.



MIRACLES
OF
HEAVENLY LOVE
IN DAILY LIFE.

By

A. L. O. E.,

*Author of "The Silver Casket," "The Young Pilgrim,"
&c. &c.*



LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1864.

257 1 68





THE peculiar structure of the following little work requires a few words of explanation to the reader. It was written with a view of being published in the shape of a packet of short stories, as well as in that of a volume ; it was necessary therefore that every chapter should be complete in itself. Instead of a connected chain of narrative, my work is rather like a necklace of beads, strung together on a thread, separate tales forming one story. The connecting thread is the idea which I have endeavoured to carry through every chapter, that the Lord works wonders of love in the common events of our lives ; that while we adore His wisdom and goodness shown in miracles of old, we should not over-

look or undervalue the daily mercies which we receive.

May our heavenly Master deign to bless this feeble attempt to illustrate some of the workings of His grace in touching the hardened heart, in rousing the torpid conscience, and in shedding over life's lowly scenes the light of His blessed religion.

A. L. O. E.





CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE STORM STILLED,	9
II. THE ENEMY CAST OUT,	25
III. THE LEPER CLEANSED,	41
IV. FEEDING THE HUNGRY,	57
V. OPENING BLIND EYES,	73
VI. THE SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY,	89
VII. THE SICK HEALED,	105
VIII. THE TONGUE UNLOOSED,	121
IX. WATER CHANGED TO WINE,	137
X. THE DARK MIND OPENED,	153
XI. THE DEAD RAISED,	169
XII. THE RIVER DIVIDED,	185







MIRACLES OF HEAVENLY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE STORM STILLED.

“**W**HAT, Anna Brett! who thought of seeing you here in London!” exclaimed a stiff, prim-looking woman, who with rapid step had been hurrying through a dull street on a gloomy November day, but who stopped short on suddenly meeting one whom she had known many years before.

Anna Brett shook heartily the hand of her old acquaintance. “’Tis my first visit to London,” she said. “We only arrived last night, and after unpacking, my first business has been to find out your sister, Mary Oldham.”

“She’s found easily enough,” said Deborah,

pointing with her green umbrella down a narrow street near. "I've just been with her," she added.

"How is dear Mary?" asked Anna; "I've not seen her since she left her place to be married, more than twelve years ago."

"Oh! she's in a peck of troubles, as she always is," replied Deborah, with an impatient jerk of the head.

"I know that poor Mary's second child is afflicted," said Anna, lowering her voice, and raising her hand towards her brow.

"Half an idiot—needs looking after like a baby; what with that and a drunken husband—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Anna in shocked surprise, "you don't mean to say that Giles Oldham has taken to drinking!"

"I do say it," answered Deborah sharply.

"He bore such an excellent character, he seemed such a kind, good-hearted man!"

"Kind enough when he's sober, but when he's had his glass a brute he is!" exclaimed Deborah, striking her umbrella against the pavement.

"I am so grieved to hear this!" said Anna,

still speaking in a low voice, while Deborah's tone was sharp and loud, as if she cared not who might hear her. "Mary never in her letters to me hinted at this sad trial."

"I daresay not, she never complains of Giles," answered the sister. "If I were Mary, I'd try and get Minny into the Idiot Asylum, and Sophy into some school, and then go to service again, and leave Giles to drink himself to death if he chose it! I'd not slave and suffer as she does! She'd have a mighty deal easier life of it, if she'd a good place as lady's maid, like the one she was in before she'd the folly to marry!"

"Mary would not think it right to desert her family," said Anna Brett. "The best chance of winning back her husband, is for her to keep faithfully at her post."

"Ah! well, she must take her own way! She'll not ask my advice!" cried the sister.

"I hope that Mary's eldest boy, Reuben, is a comfort to her," said Anna.

"Humph! no one could expect that with his father's example before him! He's nothing but a worry to his mother, a sharp little scape-grace is Reuben! He has a place now, but I guess he won't keep it!"

sorely disappointed to find that her husband had not come home.

"Won't you look at the little book, mother?"

Mary listlessly glanced at the cover, then seeing that the address was in the handwriting of her most valued friend, she took off the wrapping and looked at the fly-leaf. *With Anna Brett's kindest wishes and prayers.* The book was a little "Memoir of the Author of the Sinner's Friend," and Mary was soon reading its contents with the deepest interest, while little Sophy played with a kitten behind the counter.

"Oh, well can I guess why Anna sent me this book," thought Mary, as she paused in her reading to dry her tear-dimmed eyes. "She told me when last we met that God still works miracles of love, and is not this memoir a record of one most wonderful—most cheering. Here is the true story of a man possessed with the love of drinking, even as poor creatures of old were possessed by an evil spirit. He knew his misery, he struggled against it, he felt that he was going soul and body to destruction, and yet, while the madness was on him, he must drink, though to

drink was his ruin. But God had mercy upon him; God heard the prayers of his loving wife, and snatched him as a brand from the burning. That poor sinner was saved to be a blessing to thousands, to glorify God by his life and his works; that poor sinner is now, we doubt not, a blessed saint in heaven. If Vine Hall was thus rescued, can I despair of my husband? Was he not brought up in the fear of God,—did he not live in the love of God,—till temptation led him astray? Who has so kind and loving a heart as my Giles?—and has he not also a wife to weep and pray for him day and night,—has he not also a Saviour who willeth not that any should perish? Oh, I'll cling to hope as I'd cling to life,—God of mercy, save—save my husband!"

Again Mary Oldham turned to the book, and marked with trembling hope the means by which the cure of the drunkard, under the blessing of God, had been wrought; the medicine* which, perseveringly taken, had removed the intolerable thirst for spirits, the almost irresistible longing for the fiery poison.

* *Medicine to cure drunkenness.*—5 grains of sulphate of iron; 10 grains of magnesia; 11 drachms of peppermint water; 1 drachm of spirit of nutmeg. This draught to be taken twice a day.

"I will get it at once," she exclaimed, "I will have it made up by the chemist, if I work my fingers to the bone, if I pledge my wedding-ring to pay for it. Giles will take it for my sake—for his poor children's—for his own soul's sake he will try it. He hates his vice even while he yields to it, and if once he could burst its bonds he would be again the best of husbands, and I the most thankful of wives!"

"Mother," cried little Sophy, "there's some one coming in at the door."

Mary turned in eager hope to see her husband, but only beheld the anxious face of her sister Deborah, who seemed to bring in with her the chill of the fog as she entered.

"Has Minny got safe home?" she asked abruptly before Mary had time to utter a question.

"Minny!" exclaimed the mother, starting up in alarm, "why I left her under your care!"

Deborah could not meet Mary's agonized gaze as she answered, "The child managed somehow to slip out, I could not find her,—I thought—I hoped—she'd find her way back to her home."

Mary stopped to hear no more; with a cry

of anguish she rushed out into the street, to seek her poor idiot girl, wandering alone in the darkness and cold.

Let us now turn to Giles Oldham, the husband and father; let us see him seated within the King's Arms, where he had so often wasted his earnings, injured his health, disgraced his character, all to indulge one fatal habit, which held a grasp on him like that of a ravening lion over his prey.

Giles looked like one born for better things. He had been taught religion in his youth, and he had loved it. Never missing at Sunday school or Bible class, diligent, honest and truthful, he had been, when he was a boy, the joy and pride of his parents. Cheerful and industrious, a favourite with all, Giles had grown up to manhood; and when Mary became his wife no one doubted that a happy married life was before her. It was not till the Oldhams came up to London, that the heavy cloud appeared which darkened their home. Mary set up a little shop with their savings; Giles, who by trade was a mason, went out to daily work. Here he fell in with evil companions, who gradually led him to

indulge in habits like their own. Giles' frank, cheerful, kindly nature made him all the more open to temptations which came under the name of good-fellowship. He liked to sing his song and take his glass, and make all merry around him.

But Giles was not one who could sin against God, or injure the family whom he loved, without feelings of shame and remorse. If his evenings were merry, his mornings were miserable. The clear blue eye was growing dulled and dimmed, the once healthy cheek had lost its colour, the once firm hand was steady no more ; Giles knew all this, and was lowered in his own eyes, as well as in those of the world. When he looked at his Mary, and his helpless children, and felt that he was bringing them to ruin ; he hated himself, he despised himself, and longed to throw off his vice. Never had these feelings been stronger within him, than on the evening of which I am telling. Giles had made such good resolutions, he had given his wife so solemn a promise, and yet here he was, weak—guilty wretch, breaking his good resolution, breaking his solemn promise, offending the God whom he

once had served, and whom he still revered and feared !

Giles had gone for two minutes into a back-room to speak to the landlord, when his poor anxious wife glanced in at the door : this was the reason why he did not see her, or the sight of that pale pleading face might yet have had power to draw him away from the place of temptation. Giles returned to his seat, and called for a glass of spirits,—he would drown painful thought in drinking. Just as he was raising the liquor to his lips, something seemed to arrest his hand, and he stopped to listen. What was that feeble wailing sound that reached his ear through the jingle of glasses, the din of laughter, and the roll of carriage-wheels in the street ? Whatever it might be, it brought strangely before the mind of the mason the thought of home, and the misery there.

“ Why, Giles Oldham, my man, what’s come over ye ? ” asked one of his companions, clapping him on the shoulder.

“ There it is again ! ” muttered Giles, putting down the untasted glass, and glancing round with uneasiness. Something seemed to press

on his heart, conscience would not be silenced; there was a struggle within as if his better angel were wrestling with the tempter for his soul. Surely the prayers of his wife were heard at that moment, as Giles flung down his money at the bar, and as if from a sudden impulse, quitted that place of temptation, which he was never to enter again.

The night was dark, and Giles stumbled against an object which lay straight in his way as he passed out into the street. His foot was on something soft—he started back with a feeling of horror, for in the cry of pain which arose he knew the voice of his own idiot child.

Poor little wanderer, she had tracked her mother from her aunt's door to that of the King's Arms, where, weary and frightened, she had laid herself down, unable to follow farther, dreading to be left alone, full of strange terrors though she could have given no reason for her fears. Minny was cold, wet, and lonely; through sobs she wailed forth her piteous "Daddy's a comin'!" though quite unconscious that her father was actually near. Little hurt, but dreadfully frightened, she now

clung to the neck of her parent, as he caught up from the pavement the child whom he had well-nigh crushed under foot.


The sight of that helpless, afflicted little one, lying at the door of the public-house in which he had been drinking, cut Giles Oldham to the soul. No reproof could have been so painful as the touch of Minny's damp cold cheek. Giles saw a vivid image before him of the effects of his deadly vice. Rushing on in the path of self-indulgence, he had been, as it were trampling over wife and children in his way, crushing the very life out of the hearts of those whom he loved! Tears gushed from the parent's eyes as he bore his daughter through the streets; Minny nestling close to him, and murmuring now and then the piteous burden so often on her lips. Much passed through the mind of Giles Oldham as he rapidly strode along through the fog; there was a prayer for mercy and pardon welling up from the depths of his soul, a vow, not made in self-confidence, but with a secret cry for help to break from the fatal sin which had so long held him in bondage, to wrench himself away, at whatever cost, from the grasp of his deadly foe.

cheap baby's-hood, and little frocks, head-dresses made up with taste, but of poor materials, with very low prices marked upon them, made Anna think of the neat quick fingers which she had seen many years ago pleasantly engaged in work, while the rosy lips of the maiden were humming a merry song. When she entered the shop, Anna could scarcely believe that the thin woman behind the counter, with furrowed brow, and hollow eyes, every feature of whose face bore the stamp of care, could be the lively pretty Mary whom she had known in former days.

Mrs. Oldham did not look at Anna as she entered, being anxiously engaged in turning over all her little stock of caps before a gaudily-dressed woman, whose wide hoop almost blocked up the little shop.

"No, I see there's nothing to suit me. I must try elsewhere," said the customer, whisking off with the sweep of her shawl two or three articles from the counter, as she left the shop where for the last half hour she had been raising the hopes, and trying the temper of its unfortunate owner.

Anna stooped to pick up a cap, when the



noise of a fall in the back-room, followed by a sharp cry of pain, startled poor Mary, who with an exclamation that sounded like a gasp, hurried into the parlour to see what harm had been done.

"God help my poor friend!" murmured Anna, as she listened to agitated voices within.

"My Minny, my poor darling!" cried the mother, who was evidently engaged in trying to soothe a sobbing girl.

"Indeed, mother, it was not my fault, I couldn't stop her; she would climb on the chair," pleaded the soft almost infant tones of a still younger child.

Anna was doubting whether she would not follow into the parlour, and try whether she could not be of some use to her poor tried friend with the idiot girl, when a stout angry-looking man, in a rough great-coat, came noisily into the shop.

"Mrs. Oldham,"—he rapped on the floor with his knotted stick—"I say, is Mrs. Oldham within?"

"Coming, sir, coming," answered the mother, hastening out of the parlour at the summons, bearing in her arms a crying girl about eight

presence of a pardoning God. That night was never forgotten by Giles, and that vow never was broken !

When he who has been maddened by the love of drink, breaks like a bird from the snare of the fowler, and becomes steady and sober in all things, shall not angels and men rejoice, beholding in each reclaimed drunkard a miracle of Heavenly Love?





CHAPTER III.

THE LEPER CLEANSED.

“**H**ERE, take them, they are the last wages that I shall earn for many a long day,” said Giles Oldham bitterly, as he threw down some money on the table before his wife on a Saturday evening.

“Oh, Giles, has he been so cruel as to—”

“There’s no cruelty about it,” said Giles gloomily, as he seated himself before the fire, resting his hands on his knees. “My master can’t keep on all his hands during the winter season when work is slack; of course he chooses those as have the best character for being sober and steady; I knew I had not a chance,” and Giles stirred the fire as if to drown by the noise the sound of his own heavy sigh.

“You are as steady a man now, as good a husband and father, as any in London,” exclaimed Mary.

gentle motherly manner no child could ever resist. Anna in a few minutes had coaxed the poor young creature to her knee, where Minny sat stroking her soft shawl, and playing with the strings of her bonnet, and muttering ever and anon her mournful wail of "Daddy's a comin'," the only connected sentence which she had hitherto ever been heard to utter.

"How little you are altered, Anna!" said Mary, looking with mournful eyes at the pleasant face of her friend; "except a few grey hairs, you are just the same that you were more than twelve years ago; the same smile, voice, manner; but I!" and oh, what grief was in the poor wife's tones as she added, "Everything is changed now with me!"

"Save your faith and your love towards Him who never can change!" said Anna, softly laying her hand upon that of Mary.

"There is the worst trial of all," cried Mrs. Oldham in bitter anguish; "I have lost that faith and trust. I have been so sorely tried, it seems as if God had forsaken me." The grief which the poor wife had long struggled against in silence, now found vent in the pre-

sence of one who had been her early counselor and friend, her guide to all that is good.

Anna did not answer at once, for she was silently praying for the poor tried sufferer beside her. More tenderly she clasped the idiot child, and the little one whose mind might be shut to reason, but whose heart was open to kindness, rested her head on Anna's soft shoulder, and looked up with a meaningless smile, then closed her eyes still wet with tears, and lay still as a lamb in the arms of her pitying friend.

"All is so dark around me—above," continued Mary, speaking fast and in an agitated voice, "I am lost in such a storm of misery and fear."

"Yet the Saviour is with you, dear Mary," said Anna.

"It does not seem so—it does not feel so," replied Mary, with a sigh that appeared to come from a bursting heart.

In the low sweet voice with which she had often repeated the sacred story to her young nurselings, Anna, instead of direct reply, uttered these words from Scripture.

"And when He was entered into a ship,

Anna sighed ; she grieved from her heart for the trials of Mary, who had once been her fellow-servant, and who, when they had parted, had been a bright merry girl, with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, and a cheerful joyous spirit. Anna's mind was wandering back to old happy days, when her thoughts were recalled by Deborah's question.

"And where have you been, Mrs. Brett, this long while?"

"In my old place as nurse at Mr. Gray's."

"You don't say so!" cried Deborah in surprise ; "twenty years in one place! Why, your birds—the children I mean—must be all fledged and flown long ere this!"

"There's a new brood," said Anne with a smile. "Mr. Harry married three years ago, and has two dear nestlings of his own."

"I say!" cried Deborah, shrugging her shoulders. "So I suppose that by this time you reckon yourself quite one of the family?"

"I'm sure," replied Anna, "that I've loved the dear children as if they were my own, and now they're all so kind to me ; they say they hope that I'll never leave them."

Anna had, indeed, acted towards the mother-

less children entrusted to her care more like a parent than a nurse. With a heart full of tenderness and love, she had not only watched over their bodily health, but had earnestly and prayerfully tried to train their souls for God. She had fixed upon the wall just opposite to her bed the short text, "FEED MY LAMBS," that the Saviour's command might be the first thing that her eyes should rest on in the morning. Anna felt as if her Lord had said, "Train up these dear children for me." In the strife and trials of after-life, the clergyman labouring in his parish, the ladies active in works for God, remembered the verses which nurse had taught, the hymns which nurse had sung, the example which nurse had set, and traced their first knowledge of religion to the time when a patient, loving Christian woman had made their childhood's home a happy and holy place. No wonder that Anna was beloved by those whose infant feet she had guided in the path which leads to heaven !

After bidding good-bye to Deborah, Anna hastened on to the little shop in the narrow street which had "*Oldham*" in faded letters above the door. Cap-fronts in the window, a

cannot understand, and like my poor helpless child, will rest on a parent's love."

Anna thanked God in her heart for the strength vouchsafed to her friend. She had hope, nor was that hope vain, that a way might be opened for Mary out of her earthly trials, but in the meantime a blessing had been granted even in the midst of these trials. The Holy Comforter had come to give rest to the troubled soul, the Saviour had said to the stormy passions, *Peace, be still*; and there had followed a calm.


When the sufferer can say, "God's will be done," and the mourner, "God is love," when supported by secret power, the weak grow strong in faith; we see—and how often do we see it!—that God still can hush the storm, and that our blessed religion can yet on earth work miracles of Heavenly Love!





CHAPTER II.

THE ENEMY CAST OUT.

“H, that I could find him, that I could speak to him but one word! He promised me so faithfully this morning that he would not go to the King's Arms, that he would come home to me after work, as he always used to do in the country, and let us once more be happy together. Oh, that fatal, fatal love of drink, that fearful habit, what wretchedness and ruin it brings! If I could but see him—I am sure that he would listen—he would come home with me as he promised. Oh, merciful God! help me to find him, my poor misguided husband.”

Murmuring these words to herself as she hurried on her way, Mary Oldham sped through the London streets. Night was closing in, chill and damp, yellow fog filled the air, and dimly shone the street-lamps on the brown and

Mary hurried off her children to bed, as soon as the meal was finished. It pained the wife that the child should hear a parent's words of bitter self-accusation.

When Mary returned to the parlour, Giles was again seated before the fire, gazing sadly into the dying embers. He gave a deep sigh as she entered.

"Oh, dear husband," cried Mary, "do not let your mind always brood on what is now past."

"It is not past," answered the miserable man, "wife! wife! you cannot know—you cannot guess—the state of my mind at this moment, the evil longings, the fierce passion, the gloomy despair, that fill my soul as I sit here. I could not bear that you—even you—should look into my heart. Would you wish to know my state now? it is described in a verse in the Bible which haunts me day and night, as if written expressly for me," and with a hoarse voice Giles repeated words from Isaiah, "*The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.*"

"But oh, remember that there are other words

in the very same chapter," faltered Mary, "and they too may be written for you; *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*"

As the words were on Mary's lips she heard the postman's knock at the door. She went to answer it, and returned with a paler cheek, a more anxious eye.

"'Tis Reuben's hand!" she exclaimed, as with nervous haste she opened the letter.

"Reuben! what can have made him write? he is to be here on Monday," said the father, uneasily rising from his seat.

Mary put the letter into his hands, sat down, and burst into tears.

The short blotted scrawl ran as follows:—

"Dear mother, I won't go home in disgrace. I go on board ship to-morrow with one of my pals, and afore you get this I'll be on the wide sea on the way to the diggins. Father will be angry, but don't you fret after your son whom you'll never see more."

"Oh, Giles! Giles! can't we stop him, can't we save him?" cried Mary, wringing her hands.

"Too late!" groaned her husband, pointing

glistening pavement. Suddenly Mary stopped to listen ;—she fancied that she heard a voice behind her, a shadow fell on the pavement, and she started as two little arms were tightly thrown around her ! Great was the distress of the poor anxious wife to find that, unknown to her, Minny, her idiot girl, had been tracking her steps all the way from her home.

“Minny, my poor lamb,” exclaimed Mary, “to think of your being out at this hour, all in the damp and chill, and without your bonnet and shawl ! My weak, sickly little girl !”

The child was shivering with cold, but she had found what she sought, and with the unmeaning smile which was sadder to look on than tears, she clutched her mother’s gown and repeated her one unvarying sentence, “Daddy’s a comin’, Daddy’s a comin’ !”

Mary Oldham was grieved and perplexed. If she carried back Minny at once to her home, she would be too late to have any hope of finding her husband still sober, yet she could not take the afflicted child on with her at that dark hour, when the drizzle was beginning to fall.

“I pass my sister Deborah’s door, she will

take care of my poor darling for this one night," thought Mary, as she took up the little girl and tenderly wrapt her own threadbare shawl round Minny's head and trembling form. Bearing her helpless burden, Mary hastened to her sister's lodging. Her loud hurried ring soon brought Deborah to the door.

"What on earth is the matter? what brings you here at this hour?" cried Deborah, as she made out in the dim light that it was her sister who stood at the threshold.

"I've no time to explain—only—only will you take charge of poor Minny for this one night?"

"How could you have the folly to bring her out now? Yes, I'll take care of her, to be sure, but just tell me what's the matter. Has that drunken husband of yours been getting into some row, has he?"—

Deborah was speaking to empty air, for Mary, the instant after she had placed her child within the door, had hurried away with redoubled speed to seek out Giles through the fog and the rain.

And soon she stood, a trembling, shivering form, where the flaring gas-lights of the King's

Arms fell on her thin anxious face, as she listened to the loud bursts of laughter which came from within.

"I don't hear his voice—the voice of my Giles! if I dared but look inside!" Mary could see nothing through the frosted glass of the window; and she shrank from pushing open the public-house door, and venturing in to seek her husband amongst the noisy revellers there. Irresolute and frightened she stood, careless of the cold and the rain, her heart beating fast, her hand on the door, her ear painfully intent to catch the sound which she dreaded to hear.

Presently a man pushed past her and entered the public-house, and as he threw wide open the creaking door, Mary's quick eye had a short glimpse of all who sat drinking within.

"He's not there, heaven be praised! Giles is not there!" exclaimed the poor wife half aloud, "though I saw both Bell and Noggins who are always leading him wrong. Giles may be at our house at this moment. He has kept his promise, my own kind husband; how could I ever doubt him?"

Trembling between hope and fear, Mary

Oldham turned from the public-house, and cold and weary, threaded the dreary streets, never pausing till she reached her own little shop. The shutters were up, the door was closed ; Mary half hoped that Giles himself would answer the rap. That hope passed away as the key slowly grated in the lock, evidently turned within by some weak little hand, that had hardly power to move it.

"Is that mother?" lisped the childish voice of Mary's little Sophy, as she cautiously peeped into the street ; "oh, I hope you have brought Minny with you, I could not help her running away, she got out when the kettle was just boiling over, and I had not locked up the house !"

"Minny is with your aunt Deborah," said Mary, as she entered her dwelling with a sinking heart. "Has your father, has no one been here?" she asked, closing, but not fastening the door behind her.

"Nobody, mother, but the postman ; he brought that little book for you, that's all."

Mary sank down in a chair, rather tore off than took off her bonnet, flung it on the counter, and breathed a weary sigh. She was

I will, be thou clean. And as soon as the Lord had spoken, the leprosy departed from the man, his health and his strength returned, he was cleansed from his fearful disease."

"Oh," exclaimed Sophy, "was he not happy? Did he not spring up from the ground so joyful—oh, so joyful! I wish," she added more gravely, "that the Lord were here again to make people happy and well."

"The Lord does still cleanse the leprosy of the heart, by pouring in His Holy Spirit."

"I don't understand you," said Sophy. "I know when people have been naughty, and are sorry for it, and pray to God to forgive them, He does forgive them their sin, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"But we want something more than forgiveness, dear Sophy," said Anna, "we want holiness too, *without which no man shall see the Lord*. Suppose that the poor leper had owed a great debt, and that it had all been forgiven at once, would he yet have been happy so long as his fearful disease was upon him?"

"No," answered the child; "he would want first to be forgiven, and then made clean."

"So it is with us now," observed Anna;

“our great debt was paid, when *Jesus Christ died for sinners*, but we want to have new clean hearts, we want to be made fit for heaven, so we pray God for His Holy Spirit, to change our evil nature, to heal our sore disease. Where the Holy Spirit comes, there are *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, for these are the fruits of the Spirit.*”

“But how can we get it?” asked Sophy.

“Simply by asking for it in faith. We must come to the blessed Saviour as the poor diseased leper came; we must say, as he said, from the heart, *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.* The loving Lord will not turn away, He will not despise our humble prayer; He who bade us ask and receive will say, *I will, be thou clean.*”

Giles rose suddenly from his seat, went up to Anna, and silently wrung her hand. A bright gleam of hope had lit up his darkness of soul, he too would come and be healed. There was a power which could change his heart, and cleanse it from every stain. His debt had been paid by the blood of Christ, and now his leprosy of sin could be cleansed by

the gift of the Holy Spirit. His faith now could grasp the promise, *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ?*

Oh, when love, joy and peace descend into a contrite heart, when it is freed not only from the punishment, but also the power of sin, the might of God's Spirit shown in a pure and holy life is a most glorious and most blessed miracle of Heavenly Love.





CHAPTER IV.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY.

FAST pattered the wintry rain ; day after day down it came, as if the dull leaden sky would never be empty of its stores ! Few were the passengers that went down East Street, and all were on business, none on pleasure. Little Sophy Oldham watched through the open door of her mother's small shop, from whose eave drip drip fell the raindrops, plashing on the brown pavement below. Now and then a man with glistening umbrella went by at a rapid pace ; then there was the click click of pattens, and wrapt up in her water-proof cloak an old woman was seen, picking her way through the mud ; and then a cab driven past would awaken the echoes in the dull little street. But no one came to the shop ; no one seemed to want the caps, and hoods, and bonnet-fronts

which Sophy had thought so pretty when they had first come from her mother's hands, but which had hung in the window so long, that they had grown dingy and faded.

Did I say that no one came to the open door of Mary Oldham's small shop? Nay, there came a man, thin, sharp-featured and dark, whom even Sophy had learnt to dread. He had called thrice in the rain, and on the last occasion he had spoken words which had made the little girl tremble, for she saw that they frightened her mother. What could "execution" mean, and why was the landlord so angry, and why had father taken away to the pawnbroker's at the corner of the street the pretty patchwork quilt from the bed, and the rug from the hearth, and the nice framed print from the wall? Sophy, a little hungry child, noticed that her mother hardly ever went to the butcher, and that even from the baker so little was bought, that she felt at the end of each meal almost as hungry as when she began it. Sophy was a patient, loving little girl, and never thought of complaining, or of asking for a second slice of bread; but Minny, her poor idiot sister, would snatch at

the food on the table, and cry when she could get no more; and the parents stinted themselves with self-denying love, to supply the wants of their children.

"Oh, Giles, what's to be done!" exclaimed Mary Oldham one morning, as she poured out some almost colourless tea for her husband, while he cut into four portions the little piece of stale loaf. "Mr. Gregg came again yesterday, and he says that he will not wait longer for the rent, and that if the five pounds are not paid before Christmas, he'll seize on our little goods, and turn us all into the streets! Oh, Giles, what is to be done? You've been trying in vain to get work; our shop brings us next to nothing, and I've not a penny in the till!"

"These are hard times for us," said Giles Oldham, with an expression of manly endurance on his thin pale face. "Where are the children?" he added.

"Minnie is not well," said the mother, "she must have her breakfast in bed; I have left our dear little Sophy watching beside her, as I dare not trust her alone. As soon as you've done your breakfast, Giles, I will take up hers;

and may be you'll mind the shop to-day ; I should like to sit upstairs with my poor afflicted child."

"I am afraid that 'minding the shop' will be more a form than anything else," observed Giles; "if it go on raining like this, we've a poor chance of customers to-day."

"Or on any day," said Mary bitterly; "for my part, Giles, I see nothing but starvation before us."

"Dear wife, where is your faith? Have you forgotten the sermon last Sunday? Do you not remember how with five loaves and two small fishes the Lord fed thousands of people?"

"Yes, by miracle," sighed poor Mary.

"I often think," said her husband, "when one considers the thousands—the millions of people in this huge city of London, and how many of them are too sick, or too young, or too old to earn one crust for themselves, that it's a miracle that day after day every one of such a multitude should be provided with food."

"Some have little enough," said Mary.

"But all have some," rejoined her husband

quickly; "either by the hands of friends, or charity, or the parish, the Lord feeds His multitudes now. Why, Mary, where does all the bread come from?" Giles laid his hand on the thin slice before him; "does not the corn spring from the brown earth, was not the full sheaf of this year but a handful of corn last year, and that handful—came it not all from a few little grains that scarcely would fill this spoon? Don't we see every harvest-time how the Lord can multiply bread?"

"I never thought of it so," said Mary.

"Why, look ye," continued Giles with animation, "this England that we live in was once a wild savage place, and no corn grew naturally here; the people, as I have read, ate roots and acorns for food. Some one must have sown the *first* field with corn brought from foreign parts. Now, Mary, what an increasing and multiplying there must have been of that corn! Hundreds of harvests must have risen since, tens of thousands of acres have been sown, millions of sheaves have been gathered from the produce of that one field. What sprung from a single grain must by this time have filled a barn! And now just con-

sider, wife, that no man, not the wisest, cleverest man, *could make one single ear of wheat!* God must make it, God must give the increase; if for one year He did not so, millions of living creatures would perish for lack of food. Who that thinks on these things can doubt the wisdom or power of the Lord?"

"It is very wonderful," said Mary, thoughtfully; "but somehow the knowledge of God's power to feed us does not comfort me as it ought."

"Is not that, dear wife," said Giles, "because we doubt His willingness to do so? And yet have we not His own promise: *Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

"Giles, you have more trust in God's providence than I have," sighed Mary.

"Because I have known more of the wonders of His pardoning grace," replied Giles, who kept his own sins ever before him. "Dear

wife, you have never wandered so far from God ; you have never been brought from such depths of evil as I have."

" Oh, Giles, but that is all past ! "

" Nay, hear me out," continued her husband. " I often say to myself, if the Lord cared to seek and save such a lost soul as mine, will He not care for the body also? When He has given the living bread to one so utterly unworthy, will He deny the daily bread which we ask for in humble faith? *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* "

" I must pray as the disciples prayed," said Mary, "*Lord, increase our faith.*"

With these words on her lips the wife rose and left the room, bearing with her a share of the meal for her sick idiot child. In another minute Giles heard the step of his little Sophy tripping down the stair ; he had kept back half of his own slice of bread, and had added it to his daughter's.

" Father," said little Sophy, after she had kissed her parent, and seated herself at the table, " don't you wish we were a little bit richer ? "

"I think," replied Giles, "that God knows what is good for us better than we know ourselves, and that He has some wise reason for every trial that He sends."

"Perhaps God wants to see if we will be patient and trust Him," said Sophy. "I was praying very hard to-day; I was begging that God would stop the rain, and send some one into the shop to buy mother's beautiful things. I must go as soon as I've done breakfast, and hang up the caps in the window."

Giles assisted his blue-eyed little girl to set off to the best advantage the articles made by his wife, Sophy often stopping to admire "the sweet little shoes," or "the dear tiny hood," or to blow off the dust, and sigh over the change in the faded ribbon.

Ten—Eleven—Twelve o'clock came, still drip, drip fell the rain. Sophy had watched in vain, not a foot had crossed the threshold.

Then Giles, who was cutting pegs in the parlour, heard her sudden eager call, "Father, father, you're wanted!"

A sunburnt, rough-looking man was standing before the counter, stamping the wet from his boots, and shaking his dripping umbrella.

"You sell babies' hoods?" he asked, with a merry twinkle in his grey eye, as if he were half amused, and yet half ashamed at asking for such an article.

Sophy flew eagerly to the window to bring from it the one hung up for show. "There's another in the box up there," the little girl whispered to her father.

The customer took the hood, and held it up on his big brown fist, looking diverted at the thought of any human head fitting into anything so small.

"I'm afraid this has been in the window since last Christmas," said he, with a good-humoured shake of the head. "You see this is our first baby, and my wife is partic'lar, she is!"

"But look at the one in the box;" suggested Sophy, getting on tip-toe to pull off the lid.

"You are a nice little shopwoman, you are!" said the stranger, looking kindly at the eager child. "It's a pleasure," he added, addressing himself to Giles Oldham, "to see the young English faces after being, as I have been, out of the world for eleven long years! No, that won't just do," he added, dismissing with a

glance the second hood which Sophy had taken from the box, and which was rather shabbier than the first one; "if you've nothing else"—

"We've babies' shoes," suggested Sophy.

"Well, well," said the good-humoured stranger, who could not bear altogether to disappoint the child who looked so hungry and anxious, "I don't mind taking that cherry-coloured pair;" and as Giles wrapped up the purchase, the customer pulled out a very well-filled purse, to take from a mass of gold and silver the trifle marked as its price.

"Ay," he continued in his frank, good-humoured tone, while Giles searched his pockets for change for a shilling, "eleven years is a long time to be striving and toiling away from old England, though Australia is the place for making money, it is, for one with strong hands and stout heart, who don't mind roughing it a bit. The worst of it is," continued the stranger, "that old friends drop off or change places, and one finds everything so altered when one comes back. Now, I've just been down to my old home—found uncle dead—cousins married—friends gone—there

was hardly a soul that I knew to give me a welcome at Lewes."

"Lewes!" exclaimed Giles; "that's my birthplace."

"Ay," cried the stranger with animation, looking him hard in the face; "I thought I knew you; I couldn't be mistaken; is not your name Giles Oldham?"

"It is; but—"

"Don't you remember me, old fellow—Tom Benne, the lad as was shipped off as an emigrant eleven years ago last July?"

"To be sure I do!" exclaimed Giles, shaking heartily across the counter the rough hand of his old acquaintance.

"The sun-tanning and the beard make a change," said Benne. "I must make friends with the little one, too," and lifting up the smiling, blushing child, he gave her a hearty kiss.

"Times seem to have gone well with you," observed Giles, whose pale, haggard face formed a striking contrast to that of his jovial companion.

"Ay, ay," answered Tom Benne, "I've not made a bad business of it,"—he jingled his heavy purse—"considering as how I sailed

from Portsmouth with but one pound in my pocket, and that pound given to a poor orphan lad out of a mason's hard-earned savings. May be, Giles Oldham," Tom added with a beaming smile, "you may remember summat of that pound?"

"Well, I had almost forgotten."

"But I've never forgotten," cried Benne. "That there pound was something to you, it was *everything* to me; the seed-corn of my fortune, ye see, that sprouted up to a golden harvest. Many and many's the time I've said to myself, 'If ever I set eyes on Giles Oldham again, I'll pay him that money five hundred per cent., and thank him for it all the same.'" And before Giles had time to utter a word, a five-pound note lay on the counter.

"I cannot think," began the astonished Oldham,——

"No need for thinking or for thanking either, my good fellow; 'tis a debt. And here's a bright new shilling for this pretty little maiden, and when she's big enough to make a hood herself, I'll promise to come here and buy it!"

He was off; and Giles remained like one

who scarcely knows whether he is sleeping or waking. He was recalled to himself by Sophy's exclamation of delight.

"Oh, what a beautiful shilling! won't it buy a new pair of stockings for mother,—she's darned her's all over and over. But what did the kind man mean by giving you that dirty little bit of paper?"

"That paper," said Giles, laying his thin hand upon the treasure which he could scarcely yet believe to be his own, "that paper is worth five pounds!"

Sophy uttered a little cry of surprise and joy, clapped her hands, and jumped with delight.

"Oh, then there's money for the rent! Oh, will not mother be glad! Oh, wasn't it a lucky chance that the man came in here for the hood!"

"It was not *chance*," said Giles Oldham with emotion; "it was God who guided him here this day, who put kindness into his heart. It was God who knew our need, and has sent help when we wanted it most."

"Mother must hear the good news. Oh, let me run, run quickly to tell her!" cried Sophy.

Her father smiled consent, and the child, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, went scrambling and tumbling up the steep dark stair as fast as her little feet could carry her. She eagerly opened the door of the bed-room; but then stopped suddenly, for she saw that her mother was on her knees, with her face bowed down on her hands beside the cot of the sleeping Minny.

Sophy waited in silent reverence till her mother should finish her prayer. "She is asking God to give us money to pay our rent," thought the child, "and I am sent with God's answer."

Mary Oldham arose; a look of meek, calm patience on her face, and met the eager animated glance of Sophy. Good news were written in those sparkling blue eyes.

"Mother," she cried in a joyful whisper, for Mary had pointed to the sleeping child. "God has sent father five pounds! The rent will be paid, every penny paid. Mr. Gregg can't frighten you more!"

"Sophy, you are wild!" exclaimed Mary, scarcely able to realize the truth that her prayer had been actually heard and granted,

and yet breathless with hope, for she had never yet heard Sophy utter a falsehood.

“Go to father, he will tell you ; he has the crumpled bit of paper that the man took out of his purse. I’ll watch by Minny while you go. Oh, mother, is it not joyful?”

With a beating heart Mary hurried down stairs ; the moment that she saw her husband she felt that the good news was true. A customer was in the shop, to whom Giles was showing some cap-fronts ; but as soon as he heard his wife’s step he turned round and gave her a look of such thankful joy, that Mary’s heart overflowed with gratitude. Whence relief had come, she could not even guess ; but she was sure that it had been sent in answer to prayer.

As soon as the customer had left the little shop, Giles recounted all to his wife—the almost forgotten gift which had been returned fivefold to the giver—the strange unexpected meeting with one whom he had never thought again to behold.

“Did I not tell you,” said Giles in conclusion, “that God still feeds His people, that He has a thousand ways by which to work out

His purposes of love ? How many of us poor pilgrims through life, when we look back in old age on the path by which we have been led, will have to thank the Lord for wants supplied again and again in a way which we never expected ! His blessing on a cruse of oil and a handful of meal made them last out the stores of the rich ; His blessing on a few loaves and fishes made them a feast for thousands. Let us ask for a more thankful spirit to bless God for His providential care ; and in what others call *accident* or *chance*, let us see, and gratefully acknowledge new miracles of Heavenly Love !





CHAPTER V.

OPENING BLIND EYES.

CHRISTMAS DAY dawned, bright, sharp, and clear, "an old-fashioned Christmas," as folks said when they greeted each other in the morning. So much snow had fallen in the night that even dull little East Street wore a white robe that served to cover all defects, and make it—for once—look clean. Little Sophy Oldham gazed with delight out of the window. "Sugared roofs—sugared road—the sill so soft and white! Oh, beautiful snow!" she exclaimed; "and see the icicles hanging from the eaves, so pretty and bright in the sun!"

Giles Oldham and his wife arose with thankful hearts; the thought, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given*, was Christmas sunshine in their souls. Like the beam on the icicles it brightened, though it did not re-

move, many sore earthly cares. Giles could not forget that he was out of work, dependent on the efforts of his wife, and that they shared the grief of having one wilful son on the sea, and a poor idiot girl in the home. It was not because such sorrows were unfelt, that Giles and Mary Oldham rose with thankful hearts, but that the glad *tidings of great joy* cheered and refreshed their spirits. They could *rejoice in the Lord*, even in tribulation.

While Sophy played with her afflicted sister, her merry tones mingling with the loud laugh and senseless babble of poor Minny, Giles and Mary chatted together before the fire, undisturbed by the noise, glad that harmless enjoyment is not shut out even from the vacant mind of the idiot. Minny knew no sorrow or care; the few bright buttons which she tossed to and fro with her younger sister were sources of as much pleasure to her as golden guineas would have been to another.

"Giles," said Mary Oldham, "I am glad that you asked my sister Deborah to share our Christmas dinner."

"Ask her as often as you like," said Giles, "though it is not much that we have to offer

her. I think that Deborah lives too much alone, sitting day after day at her business of making artificial flowers, and mixing but little, I take it, even with the lodgers in the same house."

"Deborah says she doesn't care to have much to do with the people about her," observed Mary Oldham.

"It seems to me," said Giles, as he stirred the fire, "that our good Deborah is a little inclined to be hard upon other folk. She's such an honest, steady creature herself, that she can't make allowances for others:—not that I am fit to judge her," he added, putting on another coal with the tongs.

Mary was silent for several moments, and then said, "Giles, I'm not just easy about poor Deborah,—I'm not sure that she's in the right way to heaven at all."

"What makes you feel so?" asked Giles.

"Well, you see," replied Mary, speaking slowly, "of course we've known each other's minds from childhood, and then we've had several talks of late. I am so much afraid that Deborah is building her hopes of heaven upon her good character and her good works."

"That would indeed be building on the sand," observed Giles.

"Deborah compares her conduct with that of the people with whom she lives, instead of trying it by the rules set down in the word of God. No wonder that she is well pleased with herself, that she has no fears at all for her soul."

Giles could not help thinking of the Pharisee in the temple who said in his pride, *God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.* He knew well that Deborah was self-righteous, though his wife had never before spoken so plainly to him on the subject.

"Very few of us," he observed, "see ourselves as God sees us. We are apt to be blind to faults of our own, however sharp-sighted we may be to the faults of our neighbours."

"Giles, you never were blind!" cried Mary.

"Because," said her husband sadly, "there are some sins to which we cannot shut our eyes, however gladly we would do so. The persons who are in greatest danger of soul-blindness are those who keep a good name, give all men their due, go to church, read their Bibles, and then make sure that all must be right with their souls."

"I wish, dear husband, that you would talk with Deborah about it to-day ; you have read so much more, know so much more, speak so much better than I can."

"I could hardly hope that Deborah would care for anything that *I* could say," answered Giles. "There is no harder task than to make the blind see,—only God's Spirit can do it."

"Yes," said Mary thoughtfully, "because the self-righteous don't *wish* their eyes to be opened, they don't like their consciences to be disturbed. When the Lord once said to a blind man, *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* he answered, *Lord, that my eyes should be opened* ; but it is so different with the eyes of the soul, we would rather, I fear, keep them shut."

"And so walk on the path that leadeth to destruction," said Giles, "thinking all the time that we are on the straight road to heaven. Oh, what a fearful thing it must be to have our eyes opened *too late* !"

"You will speak to Deborah ?" said Mary anxiously.

"I don't feel fit for it, wife," replied Giles ;

"whatever Deborah may be before God, I believe she's a great deal better than I am. But still I have learned to *see* that I am a sinner,—to *see* that I've no hope but in my Saviour,—in this one matter, perhaps, even I might drop a word in season."

"You can but try," said Mary.

Deborah, who was never unpunctual, came as the clock struck Two. She did not come quite empty-handed ; she brought as Christmas presents to the children some sprays of artificial flowers of her own making, which were too much faded and soiled to be sold. Valueless as it was in itself, the gift gave great pleasure to Deborah's nieces. Sophy could not admire enough "the beautiful flowers,—the lovely violets and roses !" and twisted them up into a wreath for Minny's head, who, when she was shown herself in a glass, clapped her hands and almost screamed with delight. No queen could be prouder of her crown. Ah, if it be a sad sight to behold a poor idiot pluming and priding herself on wearing a few faded flowers, how much sadder a sight, *and one not unlike it*, to see a poor sinner decking herself out in fancied merits, all stained and worth-

less as they are when regarded as means of winning salvation.

The meal was a cheerful one. Christmas fare smoked on the table, little Sophy was full of glee, and Giles and Mary Oldham tried to forget all care for the time. After dinner was ended, the children ran up-stairs to play; the Oldhams and Deborah remained in the parlour chatting together.

Conversation turned upon the sermon which they had heard that morning in church. Deborah was a regular church-goer, and prided herself in being so. If any one could have read her thoughts as she sat up stiffly in her corner listening to the solemn words of the preacher, they might have seemed something like these,—

“I wish that Mrs. Dean could hear *that*! I hope Sally Jones will take that to herself! How that girl dresses to be sure!—another new bonnet already! I wish that the clergyman would preach against dress, and against wives carrying all their husband’s wages on their backs,” &c., &c., and Deborah fancied that such *listening* as this gave her a claim to the kingdom of heaven! The same kind

of thoughts, or more worldly ones, had filled her mind during the prayers; every prayer that she had uttered had been a *mockery*, and yet Deborah believed herself to be very religious, because she prayed so often. She was blind, quite blind to her state, self-satisfied because self-deceived.

"Mr. Clare may be a worthy man, I don't deny it," said Deborah, who was much given to criticize sermons, "but he don't preach like Mr. Lefevre; "he hasn't the voice of the other, and I don't like his manner at all."

Giles and Mary glanced at each other, and then the husband observed, "How striking was that part of the sermon when the preacher showed us so plainly that unless the Lord had come down to earth to take our nature upon him, we must all, even the best of us, have perished miserably in our sins."

"Now, to say the truth," answered Deborah, "I didn't like that bit of the sermon. It don't do for the clergy to put bad and good all on the same footing in that way. It confuses one's notions of right and wrong. We know well enough that we're not all alike, there was a mighty difference, for instance, be-

tween wicked King Herod and Peter or Paul."

"A mighty difference indeed!" cried Giles; "but it was the difference between *sinner*s *repenting, forgiven, and saved*, and one *unrepenting and so unforgiven*."

"What an odd way of talking you have," said Deborah, with a good deal of scorn in her tone.

"Nay, what did St. Peter and St. Paul themselves think on the subject?" said Giles, who would not let the contempt which stung him, hinder him from bringing forward the truth; "did the apostles hope to win heaven by their works, or through the merits and death of the Lord?" Mary, obeying a glance from her husband, had placed his Bible before him, and Giles, who had studied it from childhood, was not long in finding the verses that he wanted. "Here speaks St. Peter of his Lord: *Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.*" Here writes the Apostle Paul: *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!* And again, *Jesus Christ*

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. If two such apostles, saints, and martyrs rested all their hopes of heaven on the Saviour, and *only* on Him, which of us can dare to expect to reach it by any goodness of our own?"

Deborah fidgeted on her chair; she did not like the turn which the conversation was taking. She felt angry that Giles Oldham should dream of instructing her.

"It seems to me something like this," continued the speaker, who in his childhood had lived not far from the coast; "it is as if all of us had to flee for our lives across the Channel, and some strangely hoped to do so by swimming, though a noble ship, with sails spread, was ready to carry us safely. One man, indeed, might swim a few yards farther than another, but none, not even the strongest, could reach the opposite shore, but must perish in the attempt. The weakest child, carried in the ship, would pass safely over the waves; while the strong swimmer, trusting in his strength, must sooner or later sink!"

"What do you mean by the ship?" asked Deborah.

"Living, loving *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ," replied Giles Oldham with reverence.

"Ah! well, you're one of those who are always talking of *faith*; for my part, I'll stick by the commandments."

"So must we all," said Giles quickly, "as far as keeping them goes; but as for being saved by our *obedience* to the commandments, that is impossible for us, for we have broken them every one."

"What do you mean?" asked Deborah sharply; "none of us, I hope, have ever broken the sixth commandment; we have never committed murder!"

"Do you not remember our Lord's own explanation of the sixth commandment, sister?" said Mary, who had been an interested listener to the conversation between Deborah and her husband; *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.*"

"And look a little further on," said Giles, who had quickly turned over to the fifth

chapter of St. Matthew which had been quoted by his wife; our Lord's commandment is, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.* Can the best amongst us say that he has kept this commandment unbroken?"

Deborah who had little of the spirit of love and charity, knew not at first how to reply. Presently, however, she said with a scornful smile as though certain that she was now producing an argument which could not be answered: "I can quote Scripture as well as you. Was not the centurion Cornelius accepted for his works, did not an angel say that his prayers and his alms were pleasing to God?"

"They were so pleasing," replied Giles Oldham, "that God sent an apostle to Cornelius to preach to him salvation through Christ; *that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.* Had Cornelius known the way of life, there would not have been such need for Peter to teach him; had his *prayers and his alms* deserved heaven, would Peter have spoken of *remission of sins*?"

Deborah felt herself driven out of all her defences ; self-satisfied as she had hitherto been, even her pride could scarcely make her compare herself with the saints in the Bible who had sought *forgiveness*, not looked for *reward*. If they had been sinners, what was she? Ashamed, however, to own herself convinced, she only replied in a dogged manner, "Good works are good things, say what you will."

"But when we come to examine what we call good works," observed Giles, "how few deeds merit the name! Nothing is really good that is done only for the praise of men, *whatever is not of faith is sin*. If we bring our best deeds to this test, shall we not find that too many of them are only *dead works*, things without life, all tainted and soiled by sin?"

Deborah had said prayers and given alms *to be seen of men*, to be well-spoken of in the world, and from the pride of feeling herself to be so much better than others. She had never searched into her own motives, nor thought of the difference between *dead works*, and those springing from a *living* faith.

.

Annoyed at being disturbed in her self-satisfaction, and wishing the conversation to come to an end, it was a relief to her to hear the feet of the children clattering down the stairs, and to see Minny and Sophy burst joyfully into the little parlour.

"Why, Minny, where's your wreath?" asked Deborah, glad of the interruption.

The idiot laughed, nodded her head, and held up her hands which were soiled with mould.

"Sophy, what have you done with the flowers?"

"Something, something I'll be glad of next year," said the child.

"Why, your hands are as black as Minny's!" cried Giles; "what can the girls have been doing?"

"We've been sowing!" whispered Sophy with a smile, "as mother sowed seeds in the pot."

"What have you been sowing?" asked Deborah.

"The flowers, the pretty flowers which you gave us; we've buried them under the mould like the seeds, and won't we have a famous lot of new roses and violets in the spring?"

"The girl has no more sense than her sister!" exclaimed Deborah in a tone of impatience; "why, you silly child, did you think that artificial flowers ever could grow? The seeds have life, but these have none, they only look like flowers. If you wait till anything spring up from them, you may wait for ever and ever!"

Did conscience then whisper to Deborah that she had all her lifetime been doing something resembling the silly act of the idiot and the ignorant child? She had been expecting a future blessing from works which had not sprung from the root of faith, which had in them none of the sap of charity, none of the life of love! She had trusted in works which were merely stiff imitations of Christian deeds, made up of self-righteousness and pride, and soiled by many imperfections! She had sown the dead, and yet had expected to reap a living harvest! Alas, this is what is done by thousands whom the world calls good and wise!

Perhaps on that Christmas day came to Deborah's blinded soul the first faint glimmer of light, to show her that she was not all

that she had believed herself to be. She left Giles' home that evening not quite so sure as when she entered it, that she was righteous before God, that her good deeds,—her prayers, her alms,—had made her worthy of heaven. But it was long before such glimmering light strengthened to perfect day; long before pride-blinded eyes were opened fully to the truth. Years of experience were required, and many an earthly trial, before Deborah could say from her heart, *God be merciful to me—a sinner!*

It is the Holy Spirit alone that can *convince of sin*, and show clearly to us our state as regards eternity and God! To persuade proud mortals that they indeed merit punishment and not reward, that *the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, and that salvation and heaven are *free gifts* of God through the merits of Christ alone, this is the work of the Spirit of Truth, a miracle of Heavenly Love!





CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY.

WELL, this is a pleasant surprise for New Year's Day!" exclaimed Mary Oldham, as her friend Anna Brett entered her parlour on the first day of January. "I was afraid that your family had left London for the new house which you said that Mr. Gray had taken at Southgate. A happy New Year to you, and many of them!" she added, as she heartily embraced her friend, who warmly returned her greeting.

Anna Brett, with her bright sunny face, was ever a welcome guest; even Minny, Mary's idiot child, clapped her hands, and ran up to Anna, babbling words which she doubtless meant for a greeting; plucked her shawl, and laughed in her face, and received with delight her present of warm soft mittens, knitted by herself.

"Now, sit down here—by the fire, and take off your bonnet; we won't let you go till after dinner-time," said Mary.

"To tell you the truth," replied Anna, "my visit is not all to you. I wrote long ago to my sister at Stamford for the address of her married daughter in London; I only received her answer this morning, and I find by it that Elsie must be a lodger of yours."

"Not of ours," said Mary, "we have only part of the house; the rest is let to lodgers, perhaps your niece may be one."

"Her name is Elsie Dale," said Anna.


"Mrs. Dale—oh! yes, I know—first floor back; I had not a notion that she was your niece!" exclaimed Mary.

"How is she going on?" asked Anna with interest, not altogether free from anxiety.

"Going on?—well—yes—very quietly," answered Mary. The hesitation in her tone did not satisfy her friend.

"I hope that her husband is kind," said Anna.

"Well—Oh!—he's a steady, sober man," replied Mary; but Anna saw that something lay behind.



"I wish much to know about my niece," said she, "I have not seen Elsie since her marriage. She was very tenderly brought up,—too much so, I fear, for her mother did everything for her, and kept her from anything like trouble. Elsie married when little better than a child, and as I have heard, has had much ill-health and weakness since then."

"Certainly she has not strong health, poor thing," observed Mary; "but I've a notion that she would be better if she exerted herself a little more."

"I remember that Elsie was somewhat lazy as a child."

"It is not exactly laziness," said Mary, "but she has no life or spirit in her. Since Mrs. Dale lost her baby—a twelvemonth since—she has seldom cared to stir from her room, or to make anything comfortable in it. I see her sometimes, but not very often; what with my poor Minny, and needlework, and the shop, I've but little time to spare, as you may guess."

"And her husband—." Anna's question was at once interrupted and answered by little Sophy, who burst into the parlour exclaiming,

"Oh, mother, Mrs. Dale is crying so sadly upstairs!"

Then suddenly perceiving Anna Brett, the child's look of pity changed to one of glad welcome, and with an exclamation of pleasure she ran up to her favourite friend.

Anna kissed little Sophy, took her on her knee, and then, with affectionate concern, asked her why Mrs. Dale was crying.

"Oh, 'cause her husband is angry, you know."

"Why should he be angry?" inquired Anna.

"I'll tell you all about it," said Sophy. "You know our room is just by their room, so when they talk loud we can't help hearing what they say. I don't mean that Mrs. Dale ever talks loud," said the child correcting herself, "but her husband does pretty often, and then we hear every word through."

"What happened to-day?" asked Anna.

"To-day he spoke louder than ever," replied Sophy; "I can't remember it all, but he said that the room was 'a hole not fit for a dog!', and that he'd 'not a stocking ready to put on,' and that it was 'hard for a man'—I

don't know what was hard, for he banged the door as he said it, and went clattering down the stairs, as if he was in a passion. Then I heard poor Mrs. Dale sobbing and crying, as if she would break her heart ! ”

“ I fear greatly,” said Anna to Mary, “ that Dale does not treat his wife well.”

“ He has some excuse,” answered Mary, speaking with some hesitation ; “ I'm afraid that Mrs. Dale gives her husband a miserable home. I do not mean to say that she can quite help it, poor thing ! she is weak, and sickly, and has wretched spirits ; but not all husbands are like my Giles, and when a man has worked hard all the day, he likes to come back to a cheerful room and a smiling wife in the evening.”

“ Yes, surely,” said Anna, rising. “ I should like to go upstairs,” she continued, “ and see my poor niece myself.”

“ I'll show you the way ! ” cried Sophy.

“ No, my dear, I shall easily find it ; I would rather go alone,” said Anna ; and in another minute she was tapping softly at the door of her niece.

“ Come in ! ” cried a sad feeble voice.

Anna Brett entered, and was at once surprised and shocked by the appearance of the place. The window was so thickly engrained with dust that the daylight could scarcely struggle in, and it was further darkened by a muslin curtain which must once have been white, but which now almost rivalled in blackness the cobwebs which hung in the corners of the room. There was just enough of light to show that walls, floor, furniture, everything was dirty; and a stale, musty scent pervaded the place, almost sickening to Anna, who was accustomed to fresh air, and perfect cleanliness. Mrs. Dale herself, with bent form, sickly face, hair uncombed, and dress most untidy, was seated crying on her bed. She instantly recognised her aunt, and rose to meet her; but even the sight of so dear a relative seemed to give the young woman no pleasure.

"Oh, you never thought to find me like this," she sobbed, as Anna tenderly embraced her.

Mrs. Brett sat down by the side of her niece; there was no need to ask any questions; not only did the state of the room speak for itself, but Elsie, in a low complain-

ing voice, was ready to pour forth all her troubles. She told how her baby's death had broken her down—how she had never lifted up her head since, how everything had gone wrong—how she was full of aches and pains; and how her husband had grown so impatient, that instead of feeling for her troubles, he seemed now to be tired even of hearing her complaints.

Anna listened attentively, almost in silence, only now and then putting in a word of sympathy and kindness; but when Elsie had finished her long list of grievances, the aunt took the hand of her niece in her own, and began in a soothing tone to say,—

“I am aware, dear Elsie, how hard it is to struggle with weakness, pain, and depression; but God who knows our infirmity, can help us to rise above them. Every day, dear niece, brings its own trials and duties; we must ask for patience to bear these trials, and strength to perform these duties. Let us see if nothing can be done, even now, to brighten your gloom;” she glanced at the darkened window; “the day is almost as mild as spring, would you mind if I threw up the sash and let the clear sunlight in?”

As Elsie made no objection, Anna who had hardly been able to breathe in the stifling closeness, went up to the window and let in not only light, but fresh air.

"Don't you think that the place would look more cheery if the panes were cleaned?" observed Anna, whose neat hands had been blackened even by touching the sash.

"Perhaps it might," said Elsie listlessly; "Joseph has often spoken about that window, and one day I did try to clean it with soap and water, but it only looked worse than before."

"Whiting is the thing;" said Anna, "have you a bit of that in the room?"

Elsie glanced wearily towards a corner filled with rubbish, but shook her head.

"I saw a shop close by where we could get both whiting and soap. I'll tell you what, Elsie, my dear, I've set my heart on your having a nice bright room on this New Year's Day; you and I will set to work together, one at the window, one on the floor—we'll put everything to rights, and give your husband such a surprise!"

"I could not, indeed—not this day."

"No day like this!" cried Anna gaily; "I

go to the country to-morrow, and know not when I can come here again. Two pair of hands make light work. Do look and see if there isn't a scrubbing-brush in that corner, while I run down to the shop."

Elsie, a weak, languid, listless woman, needed the cheering word of a friend to rouse her to any exertion, but having once set to work, she was able to work tolerably well. Anna, with her sleeves tucked up to her elbows, laughed and talked over old days, as under her quick hands the dirty panes grew clear and bright; while the "rub, rub," of the scrubbing-brush on the floor was to her as pleasant as music.


"I have not been able to work so for many a long day," said Elsie, as she rose from her knees, her sallow face flushed with an effort so unusual. Anna noticed with pleasure that her tone was less sad than before.

"Nay, we've not half done!" cried the aunt, who was busily washing the dirty curtain which she had taken down from the window. "Just turn out the things in that corner, my dear, and let's see if you can't find an iron; and won't you stir up the fire, and

set on the kettle? We'll both want something to refresh us after our business is done."

Such a strange medley as was in that corner! Such discoveries were made there of odds and ends, heaped together in utter confusion. There were articles of clothing, broken-backed books, bits of looking-glass, a comb, a jelly-pot, kettle-holder, and sponge, with a coating of dust over all. Elsie would have blushed for shame at her aunt's seeing such untidiness and disorder, had not Anna's cheerful, kindly manner, set the young wife at ease. Anna sorted the rubbish; some things were to be thrown away—some mended—some, when cleaned and put in their proper place, would be found most handy and useful. Never had the spiders in that dull room had such an attack made on their webs—never had such sounds of cheerful industry broken the gloom of the place!

It was now past the hour for dinner. Dale would not return home till after his day's work was over, so, after washing their hands, the two weary women sat down to their meal together. Elsie brought some cold meat out of her cupboard, and made some excellent tea.



Tired as she was, Elsie Dale had not for years enjoyed a meal so much.

Anna soon found out that the same mismanagement which had left a room in disorder, was shown in every domestic concern. Dale was earning good wages, and none of his money went in drink, yet he and his sickly wife lived in constant discomfort. The pans were not clean, the food ill-cooked, good victuals were carelessly wasted. Many a kindly hint was given by Anna as to how to make money go farthest, with recipes for dishes, cheap, yet nice. Elsie was a meek and gentle woman; no foolish pride made her despise advice so kindly given, but sad tears rose into her eyes at the thought of her own short-comings.

"I see," she mournfully observed, "how unfit I am to manage for myself. I have never given Joseph a comfortable home; but oh, how can I help it! If you only knew what a sinking I have at my heart—how everything seems a burden—how weak and helpless I feel, you would not wonder that I cannot rouse myself to work with a will like you!"

"Dear Elsie, the Psalmist's words may be yours, *I said, This is my infirmity*, but oh,

God be praised ! *we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities ; the Saviour knew what it was to be weary, faint, and oppressed. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."*

"It seems to me," sighed Elsie, "that I shall never know joy again!"

"Oh, say not so, dear Elsie! Think of her who shares this very house; not two months since, Mary Oldham was weighed down with a grief which makes yours seem light."

"Ah—I know—her husband drank," said Elsie; "thank God! that's a trouble I never have known."

"But that dark cloud has rolled away. Mary prayed, and waited, and hoped, and did all that lay in her power to draw her husband back to his home, by making that home a bright one. She has found, as a good man once said, that to prayer and pains nothing need be impossible."

"I do pray—I do indeed," said Elsie.

"But we must labour as well as pray. There is wisdom in the old proverb, 'God helps them that help themselves.'"


"Ah, aunt, if you only knew what it is to feel weak and low—like me!"

"I have known it," replied Anna Brett. 'I was recovering from severe influenza, with my spirits so low that I scarcely could speak without crying, when scarlet-fever broke out in our house, and three of the dear children lay ill at once. It seemed then as if the burden laid upon me was more heavy than I could bear, as if strength and courage must quite give way. Then, Elsie, there was a promise in Scripture which was to me in my need like water to one dying of thirst. *My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* I just drank in that promise, 'twas life to my soul, and my Saviour helped me through all."

"*Perfect in weakness,*" repeated Mrs. Dale; Anna saw that her words were not without their effect.

"And now," said Anna, rising, "let us thank God for our meal, and then make the best use that we can of the short daylight as long as it lasts."

"Surely we have worked enough!" exclaimed Elsie, looking with no small satisfaction at the




changed appearance of the room, with its cobwebs removed, its furniture arranged, and the red light streaming through bright panes upon the clean stainless floor.

"Are there no clothes needing mending—no stockings in want of repair?" asked Anna, drawing out of her pocket a housewife, well stocked with needles and thread. "Let us make the surprise complete—let your husband find *all* things in order."

Two pair of hands were soon busy with untidy drawers, ragged stockings, and linen.

Nor was Anna contented yet. Elsie in her weakness and lowness of spirits had become careless of her own person; her hair was matted and rough, her dress such as she would have blushed to have worn when a girl in her mother's home. Anna did not leave her niece till her fingers, like the touch of a fairy's wand, had wrought a change not only in the room, but in her who dwelt therein. It was strange to Elsie to feel the effect on her mind as well as her person, of fresh air, and water, and light, and the simple neatness of dress to which she had long been a stranger. It seemed as if something of her youth were re-



turning to cheer her again ; she was raised in her own self-respect—the look of abject poverty was gone !

“Thank you a thousand times !” she exclaimed, as, when Anna took leave, she followed her aunt to the door. “You have done a good day’s work indeed—you have given me spirit to hope, you have given me spirit to labour.”

About an hour after Anna had left, the slow step of a weary man was heard on the stair. Dale, who, though of hasty temper, was by no means hard or unfeeling, had reproached himself on that day for the roughness shown to his wife.

“I needn’t ha’ begun the New Year with chiding,” muttered the husband to himself, “poor Elsie has enough to bear, without my setting upon her. I’ll give her a surprise, I will—I’ll buy her a prime new dress for a New Year’s gift, ’twill make all even atween us.”

With the new dress under his arm, the husband ascended up to the room whose dismal appearance he knew so well, with its cobwebs, and dust, and rubbish, and gloom, and a sad wife sitting in the corner. Dale could scarcely

believe his eyes when he opened the door. The fire was blazing merrily, all was neat, and bright, and clean, while placing a savoury supper on a spotless table-cloth, her braided hair glossy as silk, stood his wife in her tidy array, ready to welcome him with a smile.

"Why, Elsie lass!" exclaimed the husband, with a burst of honest admiration, "ye look as bonny as ye did on the day when I made ye my wife!"

How many an English home might be brightened by the same simple means as changed that of James Dale on that happy New Year's Day! If some drooping, joyless, thriftless woman should chance to glance over this page, let her ask herself if means like these lie not within her reach. But with the "pains" let her not forget the "prayer" to Him who can loosen her from her infirmity, and raise the spirit long bowed down by the power of Heavenly Love!





CHAPTER VII.

THE SICK HEALED.

A DARK shadow of trouble fell over the home of Giles Oldham; his wife was laid up with fever in the early part of the year. She whose busy needle had supplied the little shop which, while her husband was out of work, was the sole support of the family; she who had watched so tenderly over her poor idiot girl; she who had spared no toil, and grudged no self-denial for husband or children, was now unable to rise from bed, and lay there, helpless as an infant. It was a sore trial for Giles; it was as if he had lost his right hand while engaged in a desperate struggle with poverty and affliction. Giles did all that he could to supply the mother's place to his two little girls; he made the fire, he tidied the room, he prepared the scanty breakfast; but it

needed all the firmness of the man, and the patience of the Christian, to enable him to bear a trial so new and so distressing.

"Oh, father," cried little Sophy, as she watched her parent at his unaccustomed task of feeding her idiot sister, "I wish—I wish that the Lord were now here on earth."


"Why so, my child?" asked Giles Oldham.

"We would carry dear mother to Him, as people used to carry the sick, and put her down at His feet, and beg and pray Him to make her well. I'm quite sure that the Lord would not turn us away." The child's eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

"We can do the same now, my darling. The Lord is as near to us now as He was to the people who came to Him with their sick when He was dwelling in Judea. Christ hears us just as He heard them. The great God in heaven is as full of pity and kindness now as He was when a Man of Sorrows upon earth."

"Then, father, won't you pray the good Lord to make mother well?" asked the child.

"I do—every hour of the day!" cried Giles.



Sophy sat still for some minutes, thinking; then fixing her blue eyes earnestly upon her parent, she said, "If the Lord can make mother well all at once, why did you say that, as soon as you had given us breakfast, you would go for the parish doctor? God can cure mother without the doctor."

"Yes, Sophy," answered Giles Oldham, "all things are possible with God; but He pleases that we should use means, while looking to Him for a blessing."

"I don't know what 'means' are," said Sophy.

"When King Hezekiah lay sick, a prophet was sent to him from God, to tell him that he should recover, and to bid him lay figs on the sore of which he seemed to be dying. The figs were the *means* of his cure, and he was commanded to use them, but it was only through God's blessing that they did any good to the king."

"Then are doctors and medicines 'means'?"

"Yes, means provided by the goodness of God. It is the Lord who makes healing herbs to grow, and gives knowledge to the doctor to use them; it is He who puts grace

into the hearts of the rich to make them build hospitals and asylums where the sick poor may be cured. Everything good comes from God. When He blesses the means which the doctor uses to bring back our health and our strength, we should thank Him as the sick folk did, whom the Lord made whole by a touch or a word."

Giles now took down his cap from its peg, being anxious to go for the doctor.

"Father," said little Sophy, "may I go and watch by dear mother? I'll be so quiet; I'll not speak a word; I'll just creep about so softly, to bring her whatever she wants."

"No, my child," answered Giles Oldham; "Mrs. Dale has kindly offered to nurse her. I left your dear mother asleep;—there must be no noise in the house to disturb her,—not a whisper must be heard on the stairs. My great fear is—" he glanced at poor silly Minny, who, all unconscious of the sickness of one parent, or the anxious cares of the other, burst into a noisy, senseless laugh, babbling out some words without meaning.

"Oh, dear! what shall we do with Minny!" cried Sophy.

"Do you think that you could take care of her, and keep her still for quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, while I go for the doctor?" asked Giles, his face full of anxious thought.

"I don't know—'twill be very hard—mother never left us so long quite alone," answered poor little Sophy, who was both younger and weaker than her afflicted sister.

Giles, in sore perplexity, passed his hand across his brow. Sophy could not bear to see him so anxious.

"Oh yes, father," she cried, "go—go for the doctor! I will take care of Minny, if you'll put the chairs to keep her from the fire. I'll get the pretty bright buttons to please her; I'll take care that she does no harm;—oh, go for the doctor for mother, and never be anxious for us!"

Giles stooped down and kissed his pale little girl. "Sophy, you're my comfort," he said; "God's blessing be on you, my child! I'll hurry back as quickly as I can;" and after barricading the fire-place as well as he could, with an anxious, heavy heart, the father hastened off for the doctor.


"I hope God will make Minny quiet and

good while father is away," thought poor little Sophy, who felt the difficulties of her position; "if she gets into one of her wilful moods, oh, dear! what shall I do!"

The little girl's hopes were disappointed. Poor Minny, who, senseless as she was, fondly loved her mother, became very fidgety and restless, on missing her accustomed presence. Her little sister saw with alarm that the idiot was bent on running to the staircase which led up to their parent's room. Sophy desperately flung a whole drawer-full of buttons on the floor, and when Minny turned for a moment, attracted by the scatter, the child flew to the door that led to the staircase, shut, locked it, and dropped the key into the bosom of her own little frock.

But Minny was not to be thus diverted from her purpose; leaving the buttons she ran to the door, made a vain effort to pull it open, drummed on the panel, and set up a wild howl of disappointment and sorrow.

"O Minny, Minny, you'll wake mother!" exclaimed Sophy, in fear and distress. "Come here, come here, darling, I've something so pretty to show you; come into the shop and



we'll look at the people and the carriages as they go by."

Minny's mind was not so utterly dark that she could understand nothing; it was rather like the mind of a wayward infant, which can be amused by whatever attracts the eye, and she usually took special delight in watching anything in motion. Sophy succeeded, after a good deal of coaxing, in quieting Minny, and in drawing her into the shop; but here the difficulties of the poor little guardian were by no means over. Minny was in one of her wildest moods. She made a dash at the goods in the window, dragged down hoods, socks, laces, and collars in spite of the efforts of Sophy to restrain her, nearly struck her hand through the pane, and then, laughing and jabbering, began to twist the various articles of dress around her own neck and arms.

"O Minny, you'll spoil them all—all mother's work! you don't know the mischief you're doing! Put them down—or give them to me—pray, pray—oh, when will father come back!"

Sophy attempted to follow up her pleading by snatching away some of the goods from

her sister, but the idiot was by no means disposed to give up her spoils. She suddenly wrenched herself away from the little girl's hold, with such violence as almost to throw Sophy down, and then, with a cry between anger and mirth, rushed out of the shop down the street.

Sophy, in dreadful alarm, all bareheaded as she was, ran as fast as her small feet could carry her, after her sister. Wildly the idiot rushed on, heedless of whatever lay in her path; her black hair streaming loose under the red scarf which she had twisted around her head, one of her feet entangled in the strings of a cap which she was thus dragging along through the mire.

"Stop her! oh, stop her!" cried the breathless Sophy. "Stop her!" echoed some rude boys who joined in the chase, as if they had been pursuing a mad dog. Their shouts and yells frightened Minny, and made her run all the faster. With the terror of a hunted creature the poor senseless girl darted onwards, seeing nothing and hearing nothing but these loud cries behind her, till, attempting to dash over a crossing, she was struck down by one

of the horses of a carriage that happened to be passing, and fell on the road under its feet !

In an agony of fear Sophy rushed up to the spot, just as a by-stander was raising poor Minny, who, though terrified, was not hurt, the coachman having pulled up the horses so quickly that the wheel had not passed over the child.

"What has happened ! oh, what has happened !" exclaimed a lady, leaning out of the open carriage, and looking almost as much frightened as Sophy herself.

"No harm done, ma'am," said the man who had lifted up the crying Minny ; "it's only the idiot girl of Oldham, who lives in East Street ; it's a shame, it is, that he should let a child like this run wild in the streets !"

Sophy could not bear a word to be said against her father. "He did not !" she indignantly cried ; "she was left in my care, while father went for the doctor !"

"In your care ?" repeated the lady, with a wondering glance at the pale, delicate, little creature before her, who looked too young to take care of herself, far less to act as guardian to Minny. Such a crowd was now gathering

around, that Lady Green, such was the name of the lady, grew anxious to be out of the press ; she desired her footman, who had got down from the box, to put the two children into the carriage, and to tell the coachman to drive at once to their father's house in East Street.

The wonderful novelty of being in a carriage, stopped Minny's crying at once. She stared in open-mouthed amazement at the grand lady, who, leaning forward, was asking many questions of the shy little sister of the idiot.

"Father could not help leaving us," said Sophy ; "he went for the doctor, to cure poor mother !" After all her excitement and fright the poor child burst into tears.

The carriage stopped at the door of the humble shop, just as Oldham came up with the doctor. Great was his surprise on seeing his daughters in a lady's carriage ; but Sophy's first thought was for her mother ; she pulled hastily from her dress the key of the door which she had locked,—“Oh, take up the doctor quickly !” she cried.

“Is your mother so very ill ?” asked the lady.

"She can't eat—she can't sit up—she can hardly speak!" answered Sophy, with a fresh burst of grief.

"We will go into the shop, and wait and hear what the doctor thinks of her," said Lady Green, who was touched and interested by Sophy's love for her parents. She also paid much attention to Minny, speaking to her in a soft, soothing voice, and not shrinking back even when the idiot, encouraged by her kindness, ventured to stroke her ermine victorine.

Sophy was so anxious to hear the report of the doctor that she could hardly think even of the grand lady, who looked so strange a guest in that small, shabby shop. "Oh, here they come!" she exclaimed, as she heard her father's step and the doctor's on the stair.

"Will she—oh! will she get well?" cried the anxious child, clasping her hands, and looking up pleadingly into the doctor's face, as if he were going to pronounce a sentence of life or death.

"She may get over it," said the doctor, doubtfully; "she must be kept up with wine, soup, jelly; she has worked too hard, and

lived too low; she has not strength to struggle against the fever."

Sophy caught the sound of her father's deep sigh; young as she was, she knew its meaning too well.

Lady Green came forward. "Might I ask you, sir, to examine this child," she said, glancing towards poor Minny; "is hers quite a hopeless case, or is it one where care and tuition might work a cure?"

The doctor bowed, and laying his hand on the shoulder of Minny, turned her face towards the light, examined her eyes, and asked Oldham when she had first showed signs of deficient mind, with various other questions regarding her age and usual habits. Then addressing the lady he said, "This child will never be as bright as the little one yonder; but if she were placed in a good asylum, and properly taught and trained, her mind might open to a certain degree, and she might learn to be quiet, and even useful."

Oldham uttered a low exclamation; it was the first time that a hope had been held out to him that it was possible that poor Minny could ever be anything but a life-long burden and grief.

As soon as the doctor had departed, Lady Green addressed the father, "I feel interested in your child," said the lady; "most thankful am I that she has this day been preserved from what might have been a fatal accident. If it be your wish that she should be placed in an asylum of the kind suggested, I shall be willing, and I am able, to secure her immediate admission."

Giles could hardly at first reply, the offer was so unexpected. "I am very thankful for your kindness," he answered; "I should be most glad to give my poor child such a chance, only—" he hesitated and his voice faltered as he added, "only I shouldn't like to send her away without asking her mother, who has cared for her night and day, and who is—now—" he stopped short, he could not finish his sentence.

"Right, most right," said the lady; "do nothing without consulting the mother,—I am a mother myself. The first thing to be thought of now is how to restore your wife to health; I shall send this evening a hamper of such things as the doctor has ordered,—and call again to-morrow to see if anything can be decided about this poor child."

"Oh, father, is it not wonderful!" exclaimed Sophy, as the grand carriage with the lady in it rattled down the small street.

Lady Green was as good as her word. Before two hours had passed, a hamper arrived filled with such good things as Mary Oldham required far more than medicine. But she was in so feverish and feeble a state that her anxious husband could not but fear that the remedy had come too late. Through the rest of that day and the following night, Giles hardly quitted his wife, and little Sophy, silent and sad, sat for hours in the darkened chamber. Mrs. Dale, their kindly fellow-lodger, offered to take charge of poor Minny, and even to allow her to pass the night in her room. Poor Mrs. Dale, who was sickly and nervous, almost repented of her own kindness when she found what she had undertaken. All unaccustomed as she was to the burden which Mary had patiently borne for years, Mrs. Dale owed to her husband in the morning that the charge of an idiot was more than she had strength to endure, she only wondered that poor Mrs. Oldham had not broken down long before.

But the long gloomy night was over at last; and brighter days were to dawn on Oldham's afflicted family. After long quiet slumber Mary awoke so much revived, that a weight was lifted from the heart of Giles, and he ventured to tell her of the generous offer made by Lady Green.

Mary's pale cheek flushed, and her lip quivered with varied emotions, and Giles who saw the change in her face, reproached himself for having spoken too soon. Mary was silent awhile in prayer,—then her lips moved,—Giles had to bend down low to catch her tones. "If nothing could be done to make Minny better," she whispered, "I would never, while I lived, part with my poor helpless child; but if there are hopes that she might be taught, that in an asylum she might be improved—if even but a little—let us bless and thank our heavenly Father who has opened such a door before us."

Everything was soon arranged through the liberal kindness of Lady Green. Oldham was relieved from a charge which, during his wife's illness, he had been almost unable to sustain, and Minny was taken to a place where medical

skill and experienced training would be likely to work a gradual improvement on her mind. Mary's recovery was slow but sure, and on the day when she was first able to rise from her bed, Giles, who had been out of work for two months, was engaged again by his master.

"God be praised for all His blessings," cried Giles, when he told the good news to his wife, "through what trials His goodness has led us! How all that seemed most against us has turned out, in the end, for our good!"

"Oh, yes," exclaimed little Sophy, who was sitting at the feet of her mother, "I never thought when poor Minny ran away, and was so nearly killed by the carriage, that all the fright and misery would end in joy like this. If mother had never been ill, we should never have known the kind lady."

"God is ever bringing good out of evil," said Mary. "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who still works day by day, through earthly means, new miracles of Heavenly Love.*"



CHAPTER VIII.

THE TONGUE UNLOOSED.



OW sweet in the country is spring-time, when the hedges burst into green, beneath which the violets hide, and the clumps of pale primroses blow. Even in smoky London the coming of the sweet season brings something of brightness and joy. The black bushes in the squares bud into verdant beauty, misty rays of sunshine slope down into the streets, and at many a corner are sold bunches of sweetspring-flowers.

It was on the evening of a fine day in March, that Giles Oldham and his wife, with their little Sophy, and their friend, Anna Brett, sat together in the parlour behind their small shop in East Street. The day's work was over; Giles had returned from his labours as a mason, with a cheerful spirit and a good appetite for the meal which his honest industry had won.

Mary had put up the shutters of her little shop; she had on that day sold more than usual, and no care about rent or fear of want disturbed her quiet enjoyment of the evening's repose. Many a trouble and sorrow had left their trace on that gentle brow; but the expression of her eye told of a soul at peace with God and with man.

Bright, active, little Sophy took pleasure in doing all that she could to help her mother. It was Sophy who carried away the jingling tea-things, washed them, and ranged them so neatly in the cupboard, and then brought the large Bible and placed it on the table in front of her father.

Mary Oldham turned towards her guest. "Before our little Sophy goes to bed," she said, "we now have our quiet reading and prayer; I think, dear Anna, that you will like to join in our evening worship."

"I shall, indeed," replied Anna, "I heartily wish that in every home the Lord were honoured thus."

The Bible lay before Giles Oldham, but he did not open it at once. All were ready for prayer, but he did not begin to pray. A flush

rose on the workman's sunburnt cheek, and mounted up to his brow. Giles looked so uneasy and shy that Anna could not but feel that her presence was a restraint. He who, in the bosom of his family, could freely pray and read the Scriptures, seemed unable to do either before a single friend. How many would feel the like shame, strange as it is that shame should be felt in performing so simple a duty !

The women were uneasy, and glanced at each other ; the silence was becoming painful, when Sophy artlessly said, laying her small hand on the arm of Giles, " Father, aren't you a going to pray for Minny and Reuben ? "

The mention of his absent children, those whose welfare lay so near to his heart, had the effect of breaking the ice ; Giles rose, though with an effort, and knelt down, the others following his example. Very few were the words of his prayer, and those uttered with a faltering voice. Giles asked God's blessing on those near him, and on those far away from their home ; he prayed for pardon and grace, and daily bread for body and soul in the name of the blessed Saviour. The voices of the women and Sophy joined in a fervent " amen. "

Having overcome the first difficulty, Giles with less effort proceeded to open the Bible, where Sophy's little marker showed the place, and read aloud the seven last verses of the seventh chapter of Mark. Happy the home where the father gathers his family around him, and teaches them from their early years to know and love the Word of God! Had Giles done this a year sooner, his eldest son might never have been a grief and a shame to his parents. Sunday schools are blessings, church services are blessings, let none neglect such means of grace; but let no Christian father think that he has done enough for his child, if from *his own lips* that child have not learnt to know the Saviour, who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

Giles closed the Word of God, thankful that he had been enabled to overcome a feeling of false shame, and reproaching himself for cowardice in having ever entertained it. Sophy, who had sat very still during the reading, with her little hands folded, and her blue eyes fixed on her father, was the first of the party to speak.

"Father," she said, referring to the account

to which she had just been listening, "why did the Lord Jesus sigh when he made the dumb man able to speak? The man must have been so glad, why was the Lord not glad?"

"I have often asked myself that," said Giles, "we never hear of the Lord's sighing when He cleansed the leper, or opened the eyes of the blind."

"May it not have been," observed Anna, "that the Saviour knew that the very power of speech which He was giving, would be used as a means of sin? Oh, if we remember what vain, false, slanderous words are spoken by the tongue, if we remember that it is called in God's Word, *an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*, we cannot wonder that the Lord Jesus sighed when he gave a dumb man power to speak."

"Mother taught me last Sunday," said Sophy, "*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*"

"Some will have a fearful reckoning then," said Giles, with a grave, thoughtful look; "I don't like to think of that verse. There's Rob Gaseley, one of our hands, a fellow as honest

and kind-hearted as ever trod on shoe-leather, he scarcely ever opens his mouth to speak without an oath. He swears out of mere thoughtlessness, it is his habit, he means no harm; it is so natural to him that I scarcely believe that he knows when he is swearing."


"Have you never spoken to him about it?" asked Anna, "have you never shown him the evil and danger of an oath?"

Again the flush rose to Oldham's cheek, and an uneasy expression was seen on his face. "I could not speak of such things to a fellow-workman," he said; "who am I that I should reprove him?"

"Oh, friend!" exclaimed Anna with earnestness, "do not let us mistake false shame for humility. If you saw a friend grievously sick, would you fail to tell him of his danger, or to show him where he might find a cure, because you knew but too well that you yourself needed the physician?"

"I never had it put to me like that," answered Giles.

"And are we not commanded," continued Anna, "to *warn them that are unruly*, as well as to *comfort the feeble-minded*? But



then we must do so in meekness and love: we need to ask wisdom from above that we may do good and not harm by speaking; we must say, *O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.*"

"I scarcely know why it should be," said Giles, "but I feel as if I'd rather stand a knock-down blow from a man than rebuke him for swearing, or speak to him of his soul. I thought of talking to Rob on the matter once, but when I was walking home at his side, I could not utter a word; it was as if my lips were sealed! Yet all the time I was saying to myself, 'If this poor fellow, who was never taught the right way in his youth, misses heaven at last for want of some one to care for his soul, shall I be guiltless of his blood—I who have had many and many an opportunity of speaking to him about it?' Yet for all that, I could say nothing, I was as dumb as a stone on that matter, and I'm afraid that I'll always be so."

"Oh, no, dear husband!" cried Mary; "you spoke of religion to my sister, God opened your mouth then."

"When God gives us earnest zeal for His

honour," said Anna, "and a love for the souls of our brethren, we shall find that we cannot always keep silence when God's name is taken in vain, and precious souls put in danger of destruction. I remember," Anna continued in less grave a tone, as she beckoned to little Sophy to come and sit on her knee, "I remember a story which one of my young ladies used to read out of her 'Ancient History;' though not about religion, there was something in that little story which made it come into my mind when I felt unwilling, as I too often felt, to speak a word in season."

"Oh, tell us the story," cried Sophy, who had not been able to understand the conversation which had been passing between her parents and their friend.

"There was a king of Lydia in olden time, I think that his name was Croesus, who had a son who had the misfortune to be totally dumb. In silence his childhood and boyhood had passed into youth; the prince dwelt in the splendid court of his father, unable to utter a word. Then came dreadful misfortunes. The Persians fought the Lydians, and Croesus was overthrown. A soldier was about to kill

the unhappy monarch, of whose rank he was not aware, before the eyes of his son ; when in that moment of horror, fear and love did what human skill had not done. 'Spare him, he is the king !' cried the prince. The string which tied his tongue had burst, from his effort to save his father."

"Oh, was the king spared?" cried Sophy.

"He was spared, if the story be true, the dumb had spoken in time to stay the enemy's sword."

"I am so glad," said the child, with a sigh of relief.

"But I don't quite see," observed Mary Oldham, "what this story has to do with the matter of which we were talking."

"Do you not see?" said her husband ; "it is clear as daylight to me. If we were as anxious to snatch others from eternal death, as this poor prince was to save his father, we should find that we too could speak ; we should no longer be silent and dumb on the subject of heaven and hell."

"And, oh," cried Anna, "think how it must add to the happiness even of heaven, to meet there those whom we have been the means of

leading to God! How Andrew will rejoice through all eternity that he found Peter his brother, told him of the Saviour, and *brought him to Jesus.*"

"God helping me, I will speak to Rob," said Giles, "though I scarce know how to begin. The Lord must open my lips indeed, or I shall never be able to utter a word."

Nothing more passed at that time on the subject; Giles did not even mention Rob's name to his wife for several days, and Mary almost thought that her husband had forgotten his resolve, or that his courage had failed him when he tried to carry it into effect.

Giles, however, came home on the evening of the following Saturday with a brighter look, and a more cheerful manner than usual. "Well, Mary," he cried, as he hung up his cap on its peg, "who do you think has half promised to go to church with us to-morrow?"

"Not Rob Gaseley?" said Mary.

"The very man," exclaimed Giles, with a beaming look of honest triumph, as he seated himself by his wife; "I did speak out to-day."

"Tell me all about it," cried Mary.

"To tell you all that passed between us is

more than I can do," replied Giles, "my memory would not serve for that, but I'll tell you how it began. Rob and I, as you know, often walk part of the way home together, as we live nigh to one another; we did so to-day. He chatted cheerily enough as we went along, a gay-hearted fellow is Rob. I hadn't so much mind for light talk, for, you see, what we spoke of the other evening was weighing a bit on my conscience. Presently as Rob talked on, out came an oath. 'Now's my time!' thought I, 'God help me to speak!' but you have not a notion, Mary, how hard it was to begin."

"Hard, indeed!" cried Mary Oldham.

"'Rob,' said I, when he stopped for a minute, 'I once heard of a sea-captain, who, when he joined his ship, called all his tars about him, and asked them to grant him one favour. The favour was that he might be the first man to swear in that vessel.'

"'A queer favour was that,' said Rob, who didn't guess at what the captain was driving.

"'The sailors agreed to their captain's request, it seemed a small matter to grant; but they soon found that the *first* oath never

was sworn, so there was not a chance for a *second*.'

"Rob burst out laughing at first, but he presently said, 'What put it into your head to tell that there story to me?'

"'Now for it!' said I to myself; then out I spoke to my pal. 'Because, to tell you the truth, Rob Gaseley, it's a trouble to me that you've got into such a habit of swearing.'

"'Where's the harm?' said he, good-humouredly enough; 'oaths like mine hurt no one.'

"'They hurt yourself,' replied I. 'It's written in the Bible, *Above all things, my brethren, swear not*.'

"'You take to quoting the Bible!'" cried Rob; I could tell by his tone that he was offended; 'I hope, Giles Oldham,' he went on, 'that you're not turning into one of them saints.'

"'I've been far enough from a saint,' said I, 'but it's been my wish and my prayer of late, to lead a new and better life. And as for the Bible, Rob, isn't that the only sure guide as we have to heaven? We may talk what we choose, and do what we please, as long as we

are well and strong, but there's not one of us but would be glad at last to be sure of a safe home on the other side of the grave.'

" 'Time enough to think of such matters,' cried Rob; 'let's live happy lives while we may.'

" 'And do you think,' said I, 'that it can make life less happy for us to know that we've a Father in heaven to bless us, and a Saviour to forgive all our sins, and a home and a crown of glory above? I've had my troubles, Rob Gaseley, as you know well, and I know not how I could have stood them at all, had it not been for the comfort and peace which my wife and I have drawn from our Bible.'"

Mary wiped her glistening eyes. "What did Rob answer?" she asked.

"He said something—I can't just remember it all, about the strictness and straitness of religion, and how it made a fellow afraid of everything. Then it seemed as if my words came free and fast, I could scarce have kept silent if I would. I told Rob Gaseley that religion made a man afraid of nothing but sin, —sin that kept him from God, sin that would sink him to hell, sin, to save us from which the Lord had died on the cross. I told him

that one who has come to Christ has nothing to fear from man, nothing to fear from death, nothing to fear from judgment; in life he has hope and peace, and afterwards glory for ever. Rob interrupted me now and then at first, but then he listened in silence, and when I'd done speaking he said with a kind of sigh, 'Maybe you've the right of it, Oldham; I shall mind these things some time or other.'

"'No time like the present,' said I; 'both you and I have gone on quite long enough, turning away from God, and refusing to hear when He calls. To-morrow, you know, is Sunday, you come to church with us, Rob; the clergyman will tell you a hundred times better than I can, of the free grace offered to us all.'

"'I'd meant to have had a merry-making to-morrow at Greenwich,' said he.

"'Leave your merry-making for another day, and come you with Mary and me,' replied I; 'and then you'll go home with us after church, and share our Sunday dinner, and welcome.'

"And so Rob is coming," said Mary.

"He half promised as he would," replied

Giles, "and I think he's the man to keep his word. Let you and me, dear wife, not forget to pray hard this evening, that the truth, even from the lips of a sinner like me, may not have been spoken in vain."

Perhaps Mary Oldham would rather not have had the quiet of her husband's one day of rest broken in upon by a stranger; perhaps she would have preferred passing her Sunday with her little family alone; but she was too good a wife to let Giles see that his friend could be anything but welcome, and too good a Christian not to wish to help him in winning a soul for God.

Rob came at the hour appointed, went with the Oldhams to church, and returned with them to their home. Mary took especial pains that her household arrangements should speak to Rob's eye, as her husband had spoken to his ear, by showing him how neat, and bright, and cheerful a Christian's home could be. In the presence of the gentle woman, Rob kept an especial guard on his tongue; only once was betrayed into an unseemly expression, and then asked Mary's pardon directly. Gradually the mason learnt to be watchful over his

language from higher motives, from feeling that a listening God was near, and that the lips as well as the lives of His servants must be holy unto the Lord. Rob was often the guest of the Oldhams on Sundays, till he was given the blessing of a pious wife and a happy home of his own. The change in his character had been gradual but decided; and Rob always traced his first serious thoughts on religion to that day when his fellow-workman spoke to him against swearing as they walked home together from their work.

They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Oh, how great is the blessing, how glorious the promise conveyed in these words from Scripture; what encouragement they give us earnestly to try to bring erring souls to the Saviour! Yet so strange a shame seems to close our lips, so strong is the dread of scorn, *the fear of man that bringeth a snare*, that to be enabled to speak for God, to have our lips opened to His praise, is a marvel even amongst Christians, a miracle of Heavenly Love!



CHAPTER IX.

WATER CHANGED TO WINE.

“**H**AVE you heard the news, Mary ; have you heard what James Thistlewood has done ?” exclaimed Deborah, as with the eager air of one bringing tidings, she entered the little parlour in which her sister was seated at work.

Mrs. Oldham looked up from her cap-making with an expression of interest.

“ I thought that you would like to hear, as you must have known James Thistlewood so well ages ago, when he was steward to Mr. Gray, and you were lady’s maid at the house.”

“ Ay, ay,” said Mary, “ we saw a good deal of each other at that time.”

“ And some one gave me a notion,” continued Deborah, lowering her tone that she might not be overheard by her little niece Sophy, who was winding some wool for her

mother, "some one gave me a notion that, before Giles Oldham came forward, you might have been Mrs. Thistlewood yourself if you had fancied the steward as he fancied you."


A flush rose to the cheek of Mary Oldham; she looked down again at her work, and ran her needle two or three times through the ribbon.

"What an escape you made!" cried Deborah.

"What do you mean? what has happened?" asked Mary.

"You know that Thistlewood afterwards married Nancy Druce, the grocer's daughter, who was said to have lots of money to make up for her ugly face, and that he came up to London and got recommendations to be made clerk of some charity here; and you know how gaily he has been living, keeping a page in buttons, as if he'd been a gentleman born, going to the play half the nights in the week, and spending money right and left."

"Indeed, I've known little about him since his marriage," said Mary, looking up from her work; "I knew that he was settled in London, but I have never chanced to meet either



James Thistlewood or Nancy. They are in a higher position than we, and are not likely to want our acquaintance."

"Higher position!" repeated Deborah, in a tone so shrill that little Sophy looked up at her in surprise; "why, the man has absconded—gone off with the charity money placed in his charge, and has left his wife in a sea of troubles, to struggle alone as best she may with misery, debt, and disgrace."

Mary dropped her work on her knee, and clasped her hands with an exclamation of surprise and distress.

"So I might well say that you made an escape when you refused to marry such a good-for-nothing scamp as Thistlewood has turned out to be."

"Poor, poor Nancy!" murmured Mary Oldham.

"Ah, she has her own vanity to thank for her trouble! She must have known, if she'd sense to think, that she was only married for her money. But some girls are so easily gulled."

Mary rose from her seat with emotion, and hastily folded up her work. As she was doing

so, her husband, Giles, entered, and Deborah repeated her tidings to him.

"I'm mighty sorry for Nancy," said Giles Oldham, who had also known her in former days; "she will feel it all the more, poor soul, for her friends tried to prevent her from marrying Thistlewood, as he was never a God-fearing man."

The colour deepened on Mary's cheek, and the moisture rose to her eyes. "Giles," she said in an agitated voice, "could we be any comfort to Nancy?"

"She never noticed you in her grand days," began Deborah, "and now—" but Giles cut her short.

"Put on your bonnet, Mary; go and see. May be Deborah will be so kind as to mind the shop till you return."

"Or I," cried the bright-eyed little Sophy; "I can show all the pretty things in the window, and get more of them out of the boxes; and—"

"And make up the bills, and spend the money, little one?" said her father, playfully chucking her under the chin.

As Sophy's knowledge of writing went no

further than straight strokes and round O's, and she was not quite certain how many pennies went to a shilling, it was agreed that she should only act as an assistant to her aunt Deborah, who happened to have an hour to spare. Mary learnt from her sister the address of Mrs. Thistlewood, and was soon upon her way to the home of the deserted wife.

How many thoughts—what strange memories passed through the mind of Mary Oldham as she threaded her way along the streets bright with April sunshine. She remembered the time of her youth, when the sound of James Thistlewood's voice or step had sent a thrill through her heart, when she had thought of him by day and dreamed by night, and when she had almost been persuaded to join her fate with that of the man now covered with shame and disgrace. Again and again Mary repeated to herself the words of Deborah, "what an escape!" It had been a narrow escape indeed, and one for which Mary fervently thanked the Lord who had given her strength to obey conscience instead of following her own will and fancy.

Fifteen years had passed since another

April day, which Mary could never forget. A conversation which she had held on the evening of that day with her companion and friend, Anna Brett, had been the means of changing all the future course of her life.

Mrs. Gray's children were in bed and asleep, and Anna their nurse sat quietly beside them, with her Bible in her hand, when Mary, then a young pretty girl, stole softly into the room. She seated herself on a low chair near Anna, and bent her eyes on the floor, as if she were counting the roses which formed the pattern of the carpet. Mary had evidently something in her mind, but she seemed to be unwilling or afraid to begin the conversation with her friend. Anna relieved her from the difficulty by being the first to speak.

"I have been so wishing to have a quiet talk with you, dear Mary. I wanted to open my heart to you about—about James Thistlewood."

None of the roses on the carpet were so red as grew the cheek of Mary Lacy at the mention of that name. She twisted the string of her apron round and round her finger; for a few moments the room was so still that even

the soft breathing of the baby in the cradle could be heard.

"I know what *he* wishes," continued Anna after a pause, "and now I am anxious to learn what *your* feelings are on the subject."

"I've no mother," faltered Mary; "you've been like a mother and sister to me, and so, before deciding on anything so great, I knew—I felt—I ought—" she stopped short, and twisted her apron string more tightly than ever.

"The world would say that it was a good marriage for you, Mary; James has comfortable means; he is pleasant and comely; there is much about him likely to take a girl's fancy, but—"

"Oh, don't put in that 'but,'" murmured Mary, who well guessed what was likely to follow.

"Nay, I should be no true friend to you, Mary, if I did not speak plainly and faithfully to you at this most important turn of your life. You cannot but know, as we all do, that James is not a religious man."

"He is no hypocrite," said Mary, with a little impatient movement of her head; "he does not pretend to be what he is not."

“ But if he is not the Lord’s servant, Mary, if he is not on the path to heaven, how could you with any peace or comfort go through life with him for your husband? *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* How could you vow to honour him who honours not the Saviour whom you serve; how to obey, when obedience to him must clash with obedience to God?”

“ Why, you see,” said Mary, speaking with some hesitation, “ if we were once married, perhaps I should have some power to draw James to church, and then—”

“ Oh, Mary, Mary!” exclaimed Anna, laying her hand on the arm of her friend, “ do not fall into the fatal error of doing evil that good may come; of breaking a law of God in the hope that He will bless you in your disobedience!”

“ What law should I break?” asked Mary quickly.

“ Here it is in the Bible, read it for yourself,—*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.* God knows the weakness of our natures. Is it not more likely that your husband should draw you to his way than

that you should win him to your way? Could you dare hope to stand firm when you had knowingly, wilfully put yourself in a place of grievous temptation?"

"And yet—and yet," began Mary, but she could not go on.

"Could you invite the blessed Saviour to be present at such a marriage, as He was in that in Cana of Galilee? Mary, marriage should be a holy thing, for did not our Saviour Jesus Christ honour and bless it *then*, and does He not honour and bless it *still*, when two who live in His faith and fear are joined together *in the Lord*? Oh, answer me, Mary, that one question—Could you ask the Holy One to be present and give His blessing to such a union?"

Mary's answer was a sorrowful sigh.

"Remember that the first miracle wrought by our Lord was wrought at that wedding-feast. Do you think that when our heavenly Master changed the water in to wine, He did not intend to teach us all a lesson of holy wisdom? Did He not mean to teach us that when youthful beauty has faded, and youthful fancies have passed away; when earthly plea-

sures run short, like the wine at that marriage-feast, His blessing is more than enough to make up for all that time can destroy ; that He can fill our cup with good things, and keep our best joys for the last ?”

“ Oh !” cried Mary, with tears, “ if I give up James Thistlewood, life has no more joys for me.”

“ It is a great sacrifice,” said Anna, with feeling ; “ but, oh, Mary, remember how, before you first partook of the Lord’s Supper, we thought together over the solemn words of the Saviour,—*If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.* Did they not show us that we must be ready to give up even that which is dear as the apple of the eye, if conscience require the sacrifice ?”

“ But does conscience require this ?” sobbed Mary.

“ If to marry one who is careless of religion be to break God’s written command, which bids us marry *only in the Lord*, if it be to put your own soul into a position of temptation and danger, surely your question is answered,” said Anna.

The night which followed this conversation

was one of sleepless sorrow, doubt, and distress to Mary, but it was also a night of prayer. In the morning the sacrifice was made, and the young girl gave up her own will and hopes because she would marry *only in the Lord*.

Very low and sad was Mary for a time after the effort had been made. She was first roused from her sorrow by indignant surprise at finding how soon James Thistlewood had offered himself to another—to one whose only recommendation was the possession of plenty of money. Then the eyes of Mary were opened indeed; then could she be thankful to God that she had not trusted her happiness to one whom she could never have truly honoured. Brighter days were to come; when Mary, a happy young bride, stood in the church with Giles Oldham beside her, there was no cloud to darken her joy, for she knew that the Lord was an invited guest at her wedding-feast, and that it was He who had joined her hand with that of the man whom she loved.

Such were the memories that filled the mind of Mary Oldham as she went on her way to the home of a wretched, deserted wife.

Her own married life had indeed been full of cares and troubles ; she had known poverty, sickness, disappointment ; her wine of earthly pleasure had seemed to have come to an end ! Worst of all, her honest, God-fearing husband had been at one time led away into evil, had fallen into bad habits, had appeared to be in danger of becoming a confirmed drunkard. But Mary had married in the fear of God, and the blessing of God was upon her ; her prayers had been heard, her trials had been softened, her wanderer had been brought back, friends had been raised up to her in her need ; she had learned by experience that God can and will *make all things work together for good to them that love Him*. And now Mary and Giles were treading together the path to heaven, happy in mutual confidence and love, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God ! They knew that even death itself could have no power long to part them, since their love begun on earth would last through ages without end, for they were *one in Christ*.

Mary Oldham reached the house of Nancy Thistlewood, which was in a small street leading out of a fashionable square. The door

was open ; a policeman stood on the threshold talking to a flaunting-looking maid who was in the hall.

"Dear heart ! so there'll be an execution in the house ; well, well, it's a good job that missus has gone off to her friends in the country ; 'twould have broken her heart, it would, to have seen a sale going on here !"

"Then Mrs. Thistlewood has left London ?" asked Mary Oldham, addressing the maid.

"Bless you, yes, her friends have taken her away," rattled on the talkative girl ; "she was half mad with passion, she was, when she found what master had done. Spent all her money, he had, and that of other folk, and then made off, leaving her the bills coming in, and the tradesmen pressing to be paid, till I was really ashamed, I was, to answer the door to 'em all. Not that it was any fault of mine, or of missus neither, that master turned out a rogue ; what was to be expected of a man who never entered a church after he was married, and who had not so much as a Bible in the house ?"

"The detectives are after him," observed the policeman, as he turned on his heel to

depart, and he said something as he sauntered away about "seeing the inside of a jail."

"Your poor mistress must have suffered much," said Mary to the maid.

"Suffered! I should think so," replied the girl; "as many days in her bed as out of it, and scarce an hour free of pain; she upstairs moaning and crying, master below, rollicking and feasting, or out with his friends at the play. 'Twas not much of each other they saw, and the less the better say I, for 'twas scolding here, and reproaching there; master in a passion, missus in a temper, or maybe in tears. 'Twas a cat and dog's life they led; but what better was to be looked for?"

Mary turned away with a sickening heart. This was marriage NOT *in the Lord*! She could not but recall some homely words which she had heard when a child from her father,—
"When the great Friend is not asked to a wedding, the great Enemy comes without the asking. If God does not turn the water into wine, the Devil is ready to turn it into gall."

"When I was ill," thought Mary, as she retraced her steps to her home, "I had one ever ready to nurse me and tend me as gently

as my own mother could have done. Dear Giles grudged not days of watching, or long weary nights without sleep, and would stint himself to get such trifles as he thought that I might fancy. Oh, bless him ! he never forgot that he had vowed before the Lord to love and cherish his wife in sickness as well as in health. And when poverty pressed us hard in the long, long terrible winter, and we scarcely knew how to put bread into the mouths of our children ; when I, poor sinner, was well-nigh ready to give up all in despair, didn't he take me by the hand and say, ' Dear wife, where is your faith ? ' and was it not his prayers at last that brought down a blessing upon us ? Oh, joyful was the day when Giles first asked me to be his wife, and joyful was that when we two plighted our vows together, but we never loved in joy as we have loved in sorrow ; 'twas the Lord that joined our hands and our hearts, and He keeps the best to the last ! "


So, with light step and a heart overflowing with gratitude, Mary Oldham turned into the little street, rendered dear to her by memories such as these. Sophy stood ready to welcome

her at the door,—Sophy, on whose blue eyes Mary delighted to look, because they were so much like her father's. Never had her home seemed brighter to Mary than it did on that day; never had she thanked God more from her heart that He had given her a husband whom she could honour as well as love, and trust as well as obey. No shadow of a doubt came between them; they had hopes, fears, and pleasures, in common; together they read God's Word, together they knelt in prayer!

“Joys thus divided could only increase;
Griefs thus divided were hushed into peace.”

Were husbands and wives thus ever made one in the Lord, how holy and how happy a state would marriage appear! Looking together to the Saviour for His guidance and blessing, they would find that when beauty, youth, and mirth are all passed and gone, that He can fill their place with far better joys, turning life's bitter waters to wine by the power of Heavenly Love.

“How soon the sparkling wine of ardent love'
May at life's wedding-feast exhausted prove,
Unless the Saviour, an invited guest,
The cup hath hallowed and the union blessed!
He bids the sacred draught through life extend,
The drops most sweet, most precious, at the end!”





CHAPTER X.

THE DARK MIND OPENED.

"OH, mother, are you not impatient to see Minny?" exclaimed little Sophy Oldham, who seemed unable to keep quiet for two minutes together, in the restlessness caused by an expected arrival.


"I must try to be patient, my darling," said the mother; it is a long long way from the asylum. Father did not think that he could bring Minny home before three."

"I wish that I could push on the hand of the clock!" exclaimed Sophy; "that little short hand that creeps on so slowly. Oh, what a long while Minny has been away!" and the child began counting upon her small fingers, as she had done twenty times before, the *one, two, three, four, five, six* months that had passed since the kind lady had sent her poor afflicted sister to be taught at an idiot asylum.

"Suppose now, Sophy," said Mrs. Oldham, "that instead of keeping yourself and me in a flutter, you creep softly upstairs to the lodger above, and ask if you cannot do something for Mrs. Dale or her little new baby."

Sophy was always glad of a message that gave her a chance of a peep at the tiny stranger, whose little bald head, and soft pink face, excited her curiosity and wonder. Mrs. Oldham required a few minutes of quiet to compose her own heart, full as it was of mingling hope and fear, anxiety and joyful expectation, as she watched for her husband's return with the child whose mind had been clouded so long. Was Minny to come back to her home as she had left it, a helpless burden,—a constant source of care ; or had God blessed the means used by man to open the understanding of her child?

Sophy soon returned from her errand, with a smile on her bright little face. "Mrs. Dale is very happy and comfy," she said, "and her dear aunt is sitting beside her, and has made her a nice cup of tea. And I peeped at the baby in the cradle,—such a funny little pussy it is ! But its mother loves it,—oh, so much, as you love Reuben, and Minny and me !"



then the child again glanced at the clock. "That slow slow hand!" she exclaimed, "it has hardly moved on one bit."

"Take the buttons from that drawer, my Sophy, and string them together for your sister."

Sophy ran eagerly to obey; then stopped, with her hand on the knob of the drawer. "Perhaps Minny now won't care for bright buttons," she said; "you know she is bigger and older than me; perhaps with all the teaching she's had, Minny will be fit for something better than playing with buttons."

"God grant it!" murmured the mother.

"Perhaps she'll have learned to read!" cried the child, her hopes mounting higher and higher.

"Nay, nay, that is expecting too much," said Mrs. Oldham. "When Minny left us she could say but two or three sentences, and those she did not understand; if there be but some change for the better, some improvement however slight, it will give me hope for the future, and make me, God knows, how thankful!"

"Will Minny go back to the asylum?" asked Sophy.

"If her friends there have been able to

teach her something, she will go back to learn yet more."

Sophy's face fell, for troublesome as she had found her sister when Minny was with her, she yet had missed her as a playmate, and her hope to find the child changed and improved made her very anxious to keep her at home. In an impatient tone Sophy exclaimed, "Why does God, who is kind and good, let any one be without all their senses?"

"That is amongst the secret things which are hidden from us now, dear Sophy; in this the Lord Jesus says to us still, '*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*' But of this we are sure," continued Mary Oldham, putting her arm round Sophy, and drawing her close to her side, "it is better to have no talents at all, than to be ever so clever and bright, and not use our talents for God. A good clergyman once said, and his words comforted me much concerning my Minny, 'A time will come when the clever but godless man will *envy* the lot of the poor despised idiot,'"

"But don't all clever people know about God?" asked Sophy. "I should think that the

cleverer they were the more they would know, and so they would love Him the better."

"Alas, no, my child!" cried the mother; "for are we not told in the Bible that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God? A man may be taught to know all about the wonders of earth, air, and sea, he may count all the stars in the sky, he may speak the languages of many a land, and have the wisdom to govern a nation, and yet, in what concerns the soul, he may know less, much less, than a weak-witted child, who could not spell her own name."

Sophy opened her blue eyes wide with surprise. "How can that be?" she exclaimed.

"Because it is only the Spirit of God that can teach us the things of God; it is only He who can open our minds to understand His life-giving truth. And this reminds me, Sophy, of what happened when I was a girl in service. It will make time seem to pass more quickly to us both, if I tell you the little story."

"Oh, yes, I love stories!" cried Sophy; "you can work all the time that you speak, and I'll sit on the stool at your feet and watch

the door, so that no one can come without my seeing her directly."

"The master of the house at which I lived," began Mary, "was said to be wonderfully clever; from early in the morning till late at night, he was busy with his books and his writing. His broad brow was deep furrowed with thinking, and when I saw him at his desk with his pen in his hand, and his spectacles on his eyes, so intent on his work that he'd scarcely have noticed if a gun had been fired off close to his ear, I used to fancy that King Solomon himself could not have looked more wise than my master."

"And was he not wise?" asked Sophy.

"Wise as regards the learning of this world, but not *wise unto salvation*," said the mother. "My master wrote several big books, and had them printed and published, and mighty clever they were, as I've heard; but Anna the nurse told me, when I wanted to read one, just because it was written by master, that it was not a safe book to look over, for poor Mr. Gray did not know God's truth, and he used his learning against it."

"Oh, how wicked, how foolish!" cried Sophy.

“More foolish, my child, than anything that the most helpless idiot could have done. He might as well have tried to blacken the sun by holding up his pen against the light. But then his mind was dark, his understanding was not opened. Now, Sophy, though my master was so learned, his learning did not seem to make him happy; least of all when sickness came, with weakness and pain; for though Mr. Gray went on studying still, he did not take the same pleasure in it. It was clear that his knowledge did not give him patience in sickness, nor peace in trouble; I could not help thinking that were he to die, he would gladly exchange all his talents for the comfort which the most simple-minded Christian could draw from a single verse of the Bible.”

“But didn’t he grow wiser?” asked Sophy.

“Listen and you shall hear. My mistress sent me one day to mend a hole in the muslin curtain in master’s study, where he was sitting in his large easy chair, with his feet on his red velvet stool, and a big book resting on his knee. Mr. Gray’s little boy Ned was in the room, for my master loved his children, and liked to have them about him. The boy

came to my side to chat, while I was darning the rent in the curtain, but I told him that we must not speak then, for fear of disturbing his papa. Mr. Gray looked so ill and so sad it went to my heart to see him.

"So," continued Mary, "Master Ned stood at the window, looking out on the green lawn, and because he might not speak, I suppose, began softly humming to himself,—

‘I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.’

I did not guess that master even heard him, till he suddenly turned and said rather sharply, ‘Who taught you to sing that, Neddy?’

“‘Nursie taught me,” answered the child. ‘It’s what a poor idiot said—half an idiot I mean—when people asked him some questions about how he could get safe to heaven.’”

“‘How to get to heaven,” repeated Mr. Gray, as if talking to himself rather than to Neddy; “that is a question that well might puzzle the wisest to answer. There’s little chance that an idiot could know much of the way to heaven!’

“‘He could not find it by himself, papa,’ said a boy; ‘but would not the Lord Jesus

Christ take him by the hand, and lead him in the way?’

“I did not know whether my master was angry, he fixed such a look on the child, but it was not just a look of anger. He pressed his thin hand on the little boy’s shoulder and said, ‘It’s not for a child like you to talk of things that you can’t understand.’

“‘I know I can’t understand hard things, papa, such things as are put in great big learned books like yours. I’m something like the poor half-idiot; nursie has taught me a very very little, but that little makes me so happy! I like to know about the Lord Jesus Christ.’ The child’s voice was soft and low as he said the holy Name.

“‘What can you know?’ asked Mr. Gray.

“‘I know that the Lord loves me, or He would not have died for my sins; and I know that I love Him, and I try to be good for His sake.’

“Mr. Gray spoke not another word; he shut his heavy book, put it on the table, rose and walked up and down the room. It seems strange that so clever a man as he was could learn from an idiot and a child, but we always fancied that from that day there was a kind


of change in my master. I knew at least that the Bible was now kept on his table, he read less of other books, and certainly more of that. I myself married so soon after that I was scarcely able to judge; but when I spoke lately to my friend Nurse Brett about my old master, she told me that Mr. Gray was now one whom God had made *wise unto salvation*."

"Oh, I'm glad of that," cried Sophy; "he knew less than the idiot before!"

"And if we—" began Mary, but she was stopped by her child's sudden cry of delight, as up she sprang from her stool, and rushed to the open door.

"Oh, here they are—here's Minny! she's come at last!" exclaimed Sophy, hugging her sister, and kissing her again and again; then jumping for joy when she saw Minny locked in the fond embrace of her mother.

When the first joy of meeting was over, very anxiously did both Mary Oldham and Sophy watch to see what change time and teaching had worked upon the dull mind of poor Minny. The girl was blooming and ruddy, and she clung to her mother's side with all her former fondness; but there was still something un-



natural and strange about the poor girl's manner, betraying weakness of mind; and her laugh painfully reminded Mary of what it had been six months before. Perhaps Minny was confused by the journey, perhaps the bustle of arrival had been too much for the child; but Mrs. Oldham's heart would have ached with bitter disappointment but for the cheering word of her husband who had brought home his afflicted girl, "She's better, decidedly better."

"Don't trouble her with questions, Sophy," Giles continued, "but help her off with her shawl: I hope mother has dinner ready for us, for I'm sure we are ready for dinner."


. The table had been spread for the last half hour, and the warm broth was simmering in the pan. The little party was soon seated in the small back-parlour, enjoying their comfortable meal, after Giles had said grace, thanking God for this and for all His many other mercies. Sophy sat opposite to her sister, and then with pleasure observed that there was indeed real improvement in Minny. She sat quiet, "like a lady," as her father remarked, not suddenly plunging her hand into the dish, nor upsetting her plate, nor spilling the broth, nor rolling

her eyes about wildly. When she uttered the words, "Yes, please," Sophy clapped her hands in triumph, and Mary Oldham exchanged with her husband a look of silent delight. The most eloquent speech from other lips could not have given them half the pleasure. Any change for the better, however slight, was a ray of hope to the parents, while little Sophy's expectations were no longer bounded by reason.

"Oh, after dinner, when I have her all to myself, won't she do wonders!" thought the child. "I'll find out everything that Minny can say or do; I daresay she's getting quite clever, only she does not show it, because she don't feel at home just at first."

So, bent on making discoveries, when her mother was clearing away the dinner, and her father had gone out to buy some trifle for his child, the eager Sophy drew Minny into her favourite corner, and made her sit down on the floor. "I'll not bring the buttons, I'll bring her a book," so thought the hopeful child; "I'll see if the clever people at the asylum haven't taught her to read!"

The book—Sophy's own spelling-book—was brought, and put before the eyes of Minny.



The eager little fingers of Sophy pointed to word after word ; " Now, darling, just tell me what this is ; just show me how nicely you can spell that ! " Minny drearily shook her head, and turned over the pages in search of pictures ; it was soon clear even to Sophy that the girl neither could read nor spell.

Sophy, not willing to give up all hope, turned to the beginning of the book, where the alphabet appeared in very large type. Great A, round O, surely Minny might at least be beginning to learn something of them ! But even A. B. C. were too much as yet for the powers of poor Minny, and with vexation and disappointment Sophy shut up her book.

" Perhaps she can use her fingers, though her poor head is so dull ; I'll see if her friends have taught her to sew ! " As the idea rose in the mind of Sophy, she ran for her little work-box, and the handkerchief which she was hemming for her mother was soon put into Minny's rough hand. But again the girl shook her head, and with a discouraging " can't," she dropped the work from her listless fingers, and gave a weary yawn.

" It's no use to try ! she can do nothing—

she knows nothing—they'll never make anything of her!" cried Sophy, falling from unreasonable hope into as unreasonable disappointment. Six months seem almost a life-time to a child who has yet to learn how, year after year, a work of patience must go on. Sophy was almost inclined now to give up all further attempt to draw out her sister, till she noticed how poor Minny's eyes were watching every movement of Mrs. Oldham, as she cleaned the dishes, and washed the plates, and set them up on the shelf, turning round every now and then to smile and nod at her child so lately returned.

"Does Minny love mother?" asked Sophy, sitting down on the floor beside her, and speaking in the tone in which she would have addressed a very little child.

"Yes, yes!" said the afflicted girl, with a smile that showed that this question at least had been perfectly understood.

"And does Minny love sister?" asked Sophy.

Minny's arms in a moment were thrown round her neck, and a hearty kiss was sufficient reply.

Here was something again to encourage.

Sophy thought of their absent father, and ventured on one inquiry more. "Does Minny love any one else?" she asked.

The poor, weak-witted child put her two hands together, looked upwards, and in a soft tone of reverence answered, "Minny love—Lord Jesus!"

At the unexpected reply Sophy sprang from the floor with an exclamation so sudden and so loud that it startled Mrs. Oldham, and made her look round in a little alarm.

"Oh, mother! mother!" exclaimed the delighted child, "she has—she has learned something; she has learned the best thing of all! She can't read—she can't spell—she can't work—she can speak but a very, very little—but they've taught her to love the Lord, and He will take her as He took the poor idiot, and show her the straight road to heaven!"

And Sophy Oldham was right. The little knowledge, the feeble faith which so weak a mind could contain, was worth more than earthly talents, unhallowed by the love of God,—as a small grain of gold is more precious than a heap of worthless dust! Minny had little light indeed, but what she had came

from above, undarkened by worldly pride, and it would shine more and more till she entered that heavenly home where the weak children of God shall know, even as they are known! Oh, reader, how often have I myself felt, as I sat in a ward of the poor-house assigned to those afflicted like Minny, and read the simplest parts of God's word to quiet, attentive listeners, and then knelt with them to pray to the heavenly Father of all, "how little light is enough to guide these poor lambs to God!" They receive the truth far more readily than many whom the world calls wise! God has told us in the Bible that He will make the path of salvation so plain that *the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein*; and often, choosing the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, He works in dull and darkened minds miracles of Heavenly Love!





CHAPTER XI.

THE DEAD RAISED.

“**M**ARY, you look sad,” observed Giles Oldham, after closing the Bible from which he had been reading to his wife before they retired to rest. “You are fretting over that letter which you received this evening, telling you of the illness of your friend, Anna Brett.”

“No,” replied Mary, with a sigh; “I grieve that dear Anna should be ill, but I was not then thinking of her.”

“God has been very good to us, Mary; we must not shut our eyes to His mercies. Our need is supplied, our shop prospers; Minny, our poor lamb, is better than we could ever have hoped to see her; Sophy is all that we could wish.”

“I know it, I know it,” said Mary, vainly struggling to keep in her tears, “but God

gave us *three* children, Giles, and where is our boy, our Reuben? This is his birthday, you know. Twelve years ago I was happy, oh, so happy, when I heard his feeble cry, when I saw my firstborn babe in his father's arms! Oh, what sweet precious hopes were ours, and how have they been disappointed! Is it not nigh eight months since Reuben left England, left without coming to bid us goodbye? Do we even know where he is? Have we not every cause to fear that he is still a wanderer from God as well as from us?" And burying her face in her hands, the mother gave way to her grief, and sobbed aloud on her husband's shoulder.

"And do you not think, dear wife, that this is my daily burden also?" said Giles, with a deep-drawn sigh: "I've scarce a waking hour in which I don't think of Reuben, and not many in which I don't send up a prayer for our prodigal son. I believe," he continued in a tone yet more earnest, "that God is a hearer of prayer, that He will bring back our lost sheep, as He brought *me* back, dear wife, when I'd gone far, far astray."

"You were never like Reuben," said Mary,

raising her head, and drying her eyes; "when you for awhile were led away by bad company, because you were sociable and friendly, and did not think at first of the danger, you were never easy, never at rest, you were like a bird struggling in a net, wishing to get out all the time."

"Thanks and praises to God who broke the snare of the fowler, and set me free!" exclaimed Giles.

"But Reuben, poor Reuben! he seemed so hard, it was as if his conscience was dead; if there had only been a struggle, an effort, a pang. When he was half breaking our hearts, there was never a care on his own."

"God can raise—God has raised the dead," replied Giles, instinctively pressing his hand on the Bible which lay on the table. "Did the Lord not meet a mother weeping, like you, for an only son, and had He not compassion upon her, and did He not speak the word of power, *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!*"

"Oh, Giles," cried Mary Oldham, your faith was always stronger than mine."

"We cannot reach our poor boy," continued Giles, "we do not even know where he is, but God knows, and God can reach him, that God

whose Spirit alone can give repentance and life. Mary, as long as there's a throne of grace, and we can come to it by faith, and as long as our Reuben is spared upon earth, we'll never stop praying, we'll never stop hoping that God will bring back our son."

"Hark!" cried Mary, suddenly, "what was that?"

"I heard nothing," said Giles glancing round.

"I thought that some one tapped at the outer door, perhaps I was wrong," faltered the mother.

"I will go and see," said Giles, rising from his chair, and going through the shop to the outer door. Mary followed him with her eyes; it seemed as if some instinct told her that that tap, low, undecided, as given by one who feared to come at an hour so late, was not the tap of a stranger.

Giles unbolted, then opened the door, and a broad stream of moonlight came in as he did so, lying white on the floor, the counter, the wall, clear and distinct, for the moon was at the full, and shone in a cloudless sky. But a shadow lay on the whiteness, and Mary started from her seat as if she recognised even that

shadow, and almost before Giles knew who was standing at his door, the mother was sobbing over her son!

"My own—my lost son! thank God! thank God!"

It was Reuben indeed, the wanderer, the prodigal, who had come back in the stillness of night to his father's home. While his mother's tears were falling fast on his curly hair, and Giles Oldham wrung him by the hand, Reuben could scarcely bring out the words, "Can you forgive me, father?"

The boy was brought in, the door closed, the parents returned to the small back-parlour, scarcely able to believe that the blessing for which they had been hoping and praying, had been so suddenly granted. Mary, in a tremble with joy, hastened to bring food for her son, while Reuben, seated by his father, looked with a yearning gaze on all the familiar objects round him, and asked after the little sisters who were sleeping in the room above, all unconscious of the arrival which had filled their parents' hearts with such thankful joy.

Reuben had always looked older than his years, being a fine and well-grown boy, but

he had become much taller and thinner since he had left his home, and he had lost the wild, reckless, insolent air, which had been the outward sign of a godless spirit. Reuben wore a blue jacket and cap, such as are usually seen on sailors; his face, which was very much sunburnt, had now a grave and thoughtful expression; the most careless observer must have noticed a change in the boy.

Many were the questions asked, one following another before there was time to answer the first. It was midnight before either parents or son could think of going to rest; it seemed as if a lifetime had passed since Reuben had last been under that roof, he had so much to hear, and so much to tell to his eager, anxious listeners. I shall give his account of himself in a more connected form than that in which Reuben was able to give it, so often was he interrupted by a question from his father, or an exclamation from the lips of his mother.

"I little deserve all this kindness," said Reuben. "It's eight months to-day since I ran off with Tom Clark, the chap who was always after some mischief or other, and we

got on board the *Seamew* bound to Australia, he as one of the hands, I as a cabin-boy, for we'd made up our minds to work our way out to the diggins, and make our fortune there, or never see old England again.

"I did not find sea-life what I expected. I'd been used to hardships at home, but nothing like what I'd to put up with on board the *Seamew*. What with hard work and rough weather, and being ordered about here and there, with a cuff or a kick to remind me of my business if I should chance to forget it, many and many's the time I wished myself back in England with ever so sharp a master, or ever so poor a home. But it was not hardships, mother, as brought me to think of my soul ; all that I suffered only seemed to drive me farther from God.


"We had a strange lot of passengers in the *Seamew*, which was full of emigrants,—men, women, and children, and what with the crowding and crushing, and the rolling and tossing of the ship, and the sea sickness on the top of it all, it seemed to me that the vessel was something 'twixt an hospital and a prison. There was one parson on board, his

name was Mr. Maltravers, going out, as I heard, as a sort of missionary to the folk at the diggins. He did not care for gold, 'twas the souls of men he cared for. Never did I see any one who worked for the Master as he did. He got the captain to have daily service on board, and, sick or well, Mr. Maltravers was always ready to do his part. When hardly able himself to stand, he went amongst the passengers and the crew, as if he had been their father; he'd medicine for the sick, and help for the poor, kind words and comfort for all. If I had not been worse than a dog I could not but have honoured and loved him; but the more he tried to win us to God, the worse I seemed to grow. I hated having to come to prayers, I wanted to have nothing to do with religion, I hated and spited the man who spoke to me of my soul. My conscience was dead as a stone; and all the good words of the parson were as drops of water on a rock. I used to jeer and laugh at Mr. Maltravers with Tom Clark and such as he, and we set our wicked heads together to play him a trick if we could.

“Now you must know that at sea we slept

in swinging hammocks, and one of our favourite bits of fun was to cut down these rocking beds, and give those in them a sudden fall. I had had more than one such tumble myself, but aching bones or a few bruises didn't matter much to a young cove like me. Now Clark and I, and one or two more, set our heads together, as I told you, to think how we should give, as we called it, a lesson to the preaching old parson: he had never done us an ill turn, but we hated him for his very goodness. So 'twas settled atween us that, as I could get about the ship without notice, for my work lay in the cabins, I should cut the ropes of the parson's hammock half through, so that when he got in, his weight should bring it right down to the floor. I did it; half for malice, half for a lark, and I had not so much as a twinge of conscience when I saw Mr. Maltravers turn in to his cabin, and knew what sort of a night he was likely to have. Clark and I hung about near the door, and we could hear him at his prayers, and then, for the first time, it came into my mind what a shameful thing I had done. I would not step back, however, I was afraid of the jeers of

Clark. Presently there was a fall—a heavy fall! Clark laughed and said that the croaking old raven had tumbled out of his nest; and I laughed too, and we both ran off, that no one might guess who had done the job. But we soon found out that it was no laughing matter either for the parson or for us. I guess there was a stir in the ship the next day, when 'twas noised about from stem to stern that Mr. Maltravers had had a terrible fall, and had broken his arm, and two of his ribs, and might never be well again. Every one on board seemed as sorry as if the trouble had come to himself; but a worse storm was a-brewing. There was soon a talk that the accident had not come by chance, that some villain had cut the ropes, and the matter was searched to the bottom at once, and 'twas seen, clear enough, that each of the ropes had been clean cut half through with a knife, not a fibre was rotten. The captain was furious with rage, and a terrible man was the captain! He vowed that if his own brother had done such a thing, he'd have him up to the capstan and flogged within an inch of his life. I felt uneasy enough, as you may guess. I knew




that the captain would keep his word, and it seemed to me as if every man who looked me in the face would find out my secret.

"Suspicion fell upon Clark and me ; we'd been heard to speak against the parson, and had been seen on that luckless night hanging about the door of his cabin. Clark behaved as I might have guessed that such a fellow would have behaved, he slipped himself out of the noose by throwing all the weight upon me. The captain was awfully angry, I don't say as how he hadn't good cause, but I shall never forget his look or his voice when he ordered me a fearful number of lashes to be given on deck on the following morning. There was no use praying for mercy : the captain was a stern, hard man, and I'd heard terrible stories afore of how he had treated the men. I had nothing to look to but having the very flesh lashed from my bones. And it was dreadful to me to see how even the tender women had hardly pity for such as me. The little children hooted at me ; whatever I might have to bear, all seemed agreed that 'twould serve me right. I was like a wild beast that every one baited, and no one pitied, leastways so it appeared to me then.

"A fearful night I passed as I lay in the hold, with my horrible punishment afore me! I could almost have wished to die before morning. The torture—the misery—the shame—oh, the thought almost drove me mad, as I lay in the darkness, gnashing my teeth, vainly struggling against the ropes that bound me.

"Not that I repented—not that my misery brought me one step nearer to God. I seemed more wicked than ever, full of despair, and full of rage, with wicked curses on my tongue, and wicked thoughts in my heart.

"The morning came, the terrible morning! I was led up the hatchway to go and suffer the punishment that I dreaded more than death. There on the deck stood the red-faced boatswain, with the cat-o'-nine-tails in his hand; at the sight of it I turned so faint and sick that I hardly could stand. Then the mate came up to me and said that Mr. Maltravers had been begging and praying the captain for me, and had well-nigh put himself into a raging fever he pleaded so earnest, and as he'd got me off for this once, and I might go to his cabin and thank him.



“What I felt I can never tell; my heart seemed to rise into my throat. All I can say is that never afore had I hated myself, and hated my ways, as I did on that morning. And then when I went down to the parson’s cabin and saw him lying there so pale and ill, with the splints and the bandages on his poor arm, and terrible bruises on his face, I thought myself a wretch indeed, and would almost have borne the flogging to have set him all right again.

“I think that the pain which I felt was the very first stirrings of anything good within me, but something else was to follow. It seemed as if the more I had wronged the parson, the more he wished to serve me, and from that day he had me a great deal with him in his quiet cabin. Oh, mother, if you could only have heard how he talked to me of the Lord! Mr. Maltravers made nothing of what concerned himself, neither the pain that he suffered, or the generous kindness he had done: all that he wanted was to show me how I’d all along been neglecting and wronging the best of friends, the Lord Himself, who had not only tried to save me from punishment

but had borne the punishment Himself, that wretches like me might go free. I never had thought afore how grievous a sin it was to refuse the kindness and mercy of God ; I had never thought of the Saviour as bleeding and dying for such as me ; I had never believed that He could care whether I went to heaven, or was lost for ever. When the parson showed me that the Lord had borne the stripes which I had deserved, and that he offered me as a *free gift* forgiveness bought by His blood, and that after all that I'd done, I was still welcome to come to the Saviour,—Oh, mother, 'twas like wakening from the dead, 'twas as if God had given me new life !”

“'Twas new life indeed, my boy,” cried Mary, her eyes sparkling through joyful tears.

“But did the clergyman—God’s blessing be on him—ever recover ?” asked Giles.

“Yes, God be praised !” answered Reuben, “he got better by little and little, and long before we reached Australia he was able to walk on deck, leaning upon my shoulder. He often asked me about my home, and how I had left my parents, and when I told him that I’d a mind to go on to the diggins, he shook

his head and said I'd much better work my way back to England. It wasn't keeping the Fifth Commandment, he said, for a boy like me to choose his own path in life without consulting his father and mother, and he thought me too young to be tossed about in a foreign land amongst godless companions, where I must meet with many temptations that I might not be able to stand. I didn't give in at once, for I'd liked my first voyage too little to be in haste for a second, and I'd a mind for the gold, though I knew pretty well that a boy had a poor chance of making his way amongst the roughs at the diggins. Mr. Maltravers told me to lay the whole matter in prayer before God, and to ask for His Spirit to guide me, and when I'd done that I couldn't but see that my duty was to come home. And so home I have come, dear father and mother, I hope a changed boy from what I was when I left you. May I be your comfort and help, instead of your shame and disgrace; and try by my conduct to make you forget all the grief and pain that I've cost you."

"Oh, Giles," exclaimed Mary Oldham, with such joy as angels may know when a sinner

turns and repents, "our cup of blessings is now indeed full and overflowing. God has given us *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*. For you and I can now say with the father in the parable, *This our son was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found!*"

The joy of the parents and the repentance of the lad were not shortlived: the once graceless, hardened boy had been born again unto God. Mary could in future years point with a mother's pride to her Reuben, as the steady workman, the dutiful son, the faithful servant of the Lord. Her prayers had not been in vain; she had sowed in tears, and she reaped in joy.

For the dead in sin to live unto God, for the buried in guilt to arise, is the noblest triumph of Grace, the highest miracle of Heavenly Love.





CHAPTER XII.

THE RIVER DIVIDED.

IT was a splendid day in Autumn. The warm rays of the sun fell on fields of waving gold, where the reaper was plying his sickle. Nature seemed to bask in the glorious beams, and never had wooded slopes, or verdant meadows, or hedges gay with the wild rose and honeysuckle, looked fairer to Londoners' glare-wearied eyes, than they did to those of Mary Oldham and Elsie Dale, as—borne along in a train, they left the great city behind, speeding on their way to Southgate, a village not far from London.

And yet a shade of sadness rested upon both the travellers. With the elder one, Mary Oldham, it was a quiet, pensive sadness, like that which we feel when sitting amongst moss-grown tombs. She was going to bid farewell to a dying friend, but one quitting

earth in such peace and hope that the sharp edge was taken away from the sorrow of parting. Mary had come from a happy home, a home where love and content now dwelt, and she would not have exchanged her lot with that of any woman upon earth ; but she knew that something far better was provided for the dying Anna Brett, and that the Home to which she was speeding was brighter than any to be found in this changing world.

" I can't think how you bear it so quietly!" exclaimed the younger woman, Elsie Dale, who bore a young babe in her arms ; " I have so long been looking forward with such pleasure to showing my little darling to my aunt, and now to take him only to receive her dying blessing, it is so sad—so dreadful!" and the young mother bent over her baby, and her tears fell on its soft ruddy face. " But perhaps after all," she added, " my dear Aunt Anna may recover, we may be spared the grief of losing her, we may find her better to-day."

Mary sighed as she shook her head : " Mr. Gray in his letter could give us no hopes," she replied.

" Is it not dreadful?" exclaimed Mrs. Dale,

to whom death appeared a most terrible evil. "To think of her being cut off in the prime of her days—she is not yet forty, struck down in the midst of her usefulness, torn away from all that she loves!"

Mary did not answer at once; she was turning over in her mind the words used by her companion, and asking herself whether "cut off," "struck down," "torn away," were expressions which could justly describe the death of a Christian, however sudden or however painful it might be. She did not speak till Elsie added, almost with bitterness in her tone, "Such an untimely end is not the reward which might have been expected for such a life as my aunt has led."


"Oh, Mrs. Dale," cried Mary, "how can we call any death *untimely*, since the God of Love appoints the way, the manner, and the hour? If life be measured by the good done in it," she continued, in a voice that trembled with feeling, "dear Anna has lived long indeed. I do not believe that she has passed one day since her childhood in which she has not done something for God, something to bless those around her. All her years have been seed time

for Heaven, and now the full harvest will be reaped."

"Yes," said Elsie with a plaintive sigh; "she is at least sure of a heavenly reward."

"Anna would shrink from that word 'reward,'" observed Mary, who had been much better instructed in religious truth than her companion; "Anna knows well that she can *merit* nothing from God, and all her life-long service of love has been but a grateful acknowledgment of the *free gift* of salvation and heaven, which no human work could purchase. Anna is not saved because she has served; but she serves because Christ has loved and saved her! On His merits, and not on her own, our dear friend rests her hopes of salvation."

"Oh, yes," said the gentle Elsie; "my very earliest recollection of my aunt is of her showing me, when I was a child, a picture of the brazen serpent in the desert, and trying to explain to me by it the only way by which any human being can be saved. "We are all like the Israelites in the desert," she said; "there is not one of us that has not been bitten by the deadly serpent of sin, and not one who could live for heaven, had not the




Lord God Himself found a cure for His people." She took me on her knee, and taught me that verse which I never hear without thinking of her; "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

"That journey of the Israelites through the wilderness was, I know, a favourite subject with dear Anna," said Mary Oldham. "She often described it to her master's children, and said that the wonders which God worked for His people in the desert reminded her of what His goodness now does for us in our long journey through life. You know, of course, that Anna and I served in the same family together, where a friendship began which will last till death, and *after death*, I doubt not," added Mary, brushing away the tears which would gush from her eyes. "I was young when I went to Mr. Gray's, I had lately lost my dear mother, my heart was aching with sorrow, and I felt frightened and bewildered in the great house, where all was so new and so strange. I sat by the fire on the first

evening after my arrival, running the flounces of a ball-dress for the eldest young lady : the weather was wintry, and it seemed to me then as if all the world was so cold and dreary, and the pink silk which I was sewing lay on my black dress, as if to contrast the gay lot of others with the lonely misery of mine ! I sighed—such a bitter sigh, and then I felt the gentle touch of a soft hand laid on my shoulder, and I looked up into a face so mild, so kind, it was to me as the face of an angel.”

“No one could look on my aunt without loving her,” said Elsie.

“You are in sorrow,” she said to me softly ; “you are treading the wilderness way ; you have come like the Israelites to Marah, to the bitter waters of sorrow ; have you yet received the precious gift which can make even those waters sweet ? I did not know what Anna meant,” continued Mary, “but I felt that she pitied and cared for me, and in my dreary loneliness the voice of kindness was soothing. Anna sat down beside me, and took my hand, just as if I had been her sister, and told me of One in heaven who has compassion for all our afflictions, the Friend of the friendless, the



Father of the orphan, the Guardian of the desolate and poor. Anna told me how the cross of the Saviour can bless the saddest lot, even as the wood dropped into the well of Marah made its bitter waters sweet."

"I can just fancy that I hear her," cried Elsie.

"I often thought," continued Mary, "that Anna might soon be called to be an angel in heaven, she did so delight in doing angel's work below. More than any other woman whom I ever have known she possessed the charity described by St. Paul which *suffereth long and is kind, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*. The faith which dwelt in her heart was shown by her lips, and proved in her life."


The shrill whistle of the railway now announced that the train was approaching a station. The noise startled Elsie's baby from sleep, and she was engaged for some minutes in hushing the wail of the frightened child, whose cries were not silenced even after the train had stopped, and the travellers had left the carriage.

"Poor little darling," said Elsie, fondling

the infant, drawing him closer to her breast, and pressing his face to her own. "He's but a young traveller yet ; he'll soon learn not to be frightened at the sound that tells him that his journey has come to an end."

Mary, as she walked beside the young mother along the green country lane, silently drew in her mind a comparison between the causeless terror of the babe, and that which even some earnest Christians feel as they draw near the hour of death. The warning that tells us that life's journey is almost over is a startling sound to many. But the Good Shepherd will bear the feeble lambs in His bosom, and hush the terrors of those who cling the more closely to Him because of the fears which they feel.

The house which Mr. Gray, the master of Anna Brett, had taken near Southgate, was a large and pleasant mansion, surrounded by beautiful grounds. As Mary and her companion, after passing the large iron gate and the lodge, walked up the broad avenue shaded by trees, they both of them thought that they never before had seen so delightful a place. Accustomed as they were to dull, dark, narrow



streets in London, with their crowds, their noise, their thick close air, every breeze here seemed laden with perfume, and every object bright with beauty. It was a rare pleasure even to tread on the soft elastic turf, and when the women came in sight of the flower-garden, with its beds of fuchsia, heliotrope, and scarlet geranium, they uttered exclamations of wonder and admiration. Yet the fair scene brought different thoughts to the mind of Elsie and Mary. "How sad it must be to my poor aunt," reflected one, "to leave this beautiful earth." The other gazed on the verdant trees, the emerald turf, the garden gay with a thousand flowers, and gently murmured to herself,—

"If a fallen world thus fair we see
What—Oh, what must Heaven be!"

Mary and Elsie were met at the door by the youngest daughter of Mr. Gray; her eyes were red with weeping. "Oh, you've come—I'm so glad that you've come, I so feared that you would be too late!" and in sorrow, as if losing a valued friend, for such indeed had her nurse been to her, the young lady led the way to the quiet chamber where, stretched on the bed from which she was never to rise, lay the

wasted form of Anna. Even the baby in Elsie's arms seemed to feel the noiseless hush of that room, where the light came in softened through the drawn curtains, where no one spoke but with bated breath, and not the sound of a footfall, or rustle of a dress, was suffered to break the solemn stillness. Mary walked silently up to the bed; Elsie, still with her child in her arms, knelt down beside it, and sobbed.

Anna was for a few minutes unable to speak, and could only feebly return the fervent grasp of her friend; then she seemed to recover her power of speech, asked to see the infant, kissed him, and gave him her blessing. "God be with the dear babe," she murmured, "and lead him from grace to glory." Mary who had taken the child from Mrs. Dale, gave him back to his weeping mother.

"Shed no tears for me, dear Elsie," said Anna, feebly raising herself on her pillow, and gazing with a calm look of peace and love on the sorrowing ones around her. "Death has no terrors for me, I know in whom I have trusted." She seemed to gather strength from the thought, and the accents from these ghastly white lips grew more clear and distinct.

"When the Israelites the people of God—had almost reached the Promised Land, and the stream—the swift dark stream flowed before them,"—Anna gasped for breath, and turned her eyes on Mary, as though to ask her to finish her sentence.

"Yes, the Jordan flowed before them," said Mary Oldham in tremulous tones, "as if to divide them from their long-wished for home: but the priests who bore the Ark of God went down first into the river, and as soon as the soles of their feet were dipped in the brim of Jordan, the water was stayed from flowing, and all the tens of thousands of Israel passed over on dry ground."

"That is it—that is it—that is what I would say," whispered the dying woman; "our great High Priest, our Saviour, has gone down into the river of death before us, and now—now—there is nothing for His redeemed people to fear. The waters cannot overflow—cannot reach them, no, even the babes pass over untouched, the feeblest can go dry-shod! I am crossing now—I shall soon be over, and beyond is the home that I long for, and Him whom, not having seen, I love!"

"Oh," exclaimed Elsie through her tears, "can this indeed be death?"

A slight convulsion passed over the frame of the expiring woman; Mary and her companions looked on in breathless awe. Anna's eyes were closed for a little space, then she opened them with a faint smile. Her lips moved again, but those who bent forward to listen could scarcely catch the faint accents; "*Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; living or dying, therefore, we are the Lord's;*" and with these words on her lips, quietly and peacefully the Christian yielded up her soul to her God. Scarcely was the moment known when the gentle spirit departed; none moved or spoke in the chamber, only the soft south breeze lightly rustled in the curtains and outside the window a thrush warbled forth his song of joy.

The glorious sun was setting, cradled in clouds of crimson and gold, when with weeping eyes and sorrowing hearts, Mary and Elsie left the mansion which had been visited by death, to return to their home in London. Floods of red light poured between the trunks

of the trees, and gilded their leafy boughs, and when the women had passed the lodge, and turned into the lane, they saw before them a wide harvest-field, dotted over with sheaves. How beautiful it lay in the sunshine, how soothing to the mourners were the thoughts suggested by that wide field of corn and that radiant sunset! The sheaves ready for the garner, the splendid orb calmly setting to rise in glory again! Mary raised her eyes from the bright earth to the brighter heaven, and whispered, "*May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his.*"

"No longer then let mourners weep,
Or call departed Christians dead,
For death is hallowed into sleep,
And every grave becomes a bed.

It is not exile—peace on high,—
It is not sorrow—rest from strife,
To 'fall asleep' is not to die,—
To be with Christ is better life."

Oh, dear reader, are you yet a stranger to the power of that blessed religion which alone can make life happy, and render death a gain? Would that I could so plead with you now as to persuade you to taste and see that the Lord is gracious, and that blessed is the man that

trusteth in Him. It is not only in the Bible, the Word of Truth, that we see wondrous proofs of the power and the goodness of God. Behold His workings in Providence, trace His mercy in the daily events of common life ! To the troubled heart as once to the troubled waters, the Lord says, *Peace, be still*. The fierce power of fiery passion, raging like a demon within, beneath the influence of the Spirit of God is conquered, subdued and destroyed. The reformed drunkard sits at the feet of the Saviour, *clothed and in his right mind*. The poor heart-broken sinner, bowed down under a sense of his guilt, finds that mercy has opened for him in Christ a fountain of healing, where he may wash and be clean.


Nor does divine love care for the wants of the soul alone. Which of the poor amongst us cannot tell of many an instance when, by means unexpected, by ways unknown, the Lord who has heard the cry of the needy, has supplied His people with bread ? Man has been liberal, woman has been kind, but the power to give, and the will to give, have equally come from God. Through whatever

earthly channel it might flow, the stream of relief first distilled in drops from heaven.

And has the Lord's goodness been less displayed, when proud, self-righteous hearts have been brought to the knowledge of sin; when eyes that folly had blinded, have been opened to see their danger? And when the dull and lifeless spirit has been stirred up to active exertion, when the weak have received new strength, shall not glory be given to God?

Oh, let us praise Him with thankful hearts when raised from a bed of sickness, when our health and vigour return, and we go back, as if with new life, to the labours appointed us here. Let us praise Him for every opportunity granted to us in love, of speaking of His truth to others, of leading sinners to Him. And if He bless our feeble words, if He grant our efforts success, let us with joy and thanksgiving own that the work is His, not ours, *it is God that giveth the increase.*

In the comforts of our dear homes, in the holy love that binds parents and children, husbands and wives together, let us again see precious gifts of the wondrous love of God. It is the Spirit of Life that alone opens our dark



minds to the knowledge of truth ; the feeble understanding grasps mysteries beyond the reach of human intellect, *babes in Christ* become *wise unto salvation* when they are *taught of God*.

Such blessings as these are like the daily sunshine, the nightly dew, so freely bestowed, so largely given, that we oft forget to mark in them proofs of a love divine. But even the thoughtless pause, with wonder and with awe, over the lesson taught by the deathbed of a saint. When the spirit about to enter alone into the immediate presence of God, can say, *I can fear no evil*, when the dark river of death is made a pathway of peace, then indeed is the Christian seen to be more than conqueror through Christ, and even the sceptic recognises a crowning MIRACLE OF HEAVENLY LOVE.



T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

NEW BOOK BY A. L. O. E.

THE SILVER CASKET; or, Love Not the World. A Tale. With Illustrations. Foolsap 8vo, cloth.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE SHEPHERD OF BETHLEHEM. With Illustrations. Foolsap 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 3s. 6d.

PRIDE AND HIS PRISONERS. Post 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

IDOLS IN THE HEART. A Tale. Foolsap 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

PRECEPTS IN PRACTICE; or, Stories illustrating the Proverbs. Foolsap 8vo, illustrated. Price 3s. 6d.

THE YOUNG PILGRIM. A Tale illustrative of the Pilgrim's Progress. Foolsap 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

WAR AND PEACE. A Tale of the Retreat from Cabul. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 3s.

PARLIAMENT IN THE PLAY-ROOM. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s. 6d.

THE MINE; or, Darkness and Light. Plates. Fcap. 8vo, cloth. Price 2s. 6d.

THE GIANT-KILLER; or, The Battle which all must Fight. Foolsap 8vo, cloth, with Frontispiece in Oil Colours. Price 2s. 6d.

THE ROBY FAMILY; or, Battling with the World. A Sequel to "The Giant-Killer." Fcap. 8vo, cloth, with Two Illustrations. Price 2s. 6d.

FLORA; or, Self-Deception. Foolsap 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

THE CROWN OF SUCCESS; or, Four Heads to Furnish. A Tale for the Young. Foolsap 8vo, with Illustrations. Price 2s. 6d.

THE ROBBERS' CAVE. A Story of Italy. Foolsap 8vo, with Frontispiece and Ornamental Title. Price 2s. 6d.

MY NEIGHBOUR'S SHOES; or, Feeling for Others. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s.

RAMBLES OF A RAT. Foolsap 8vo, with Two Illustrations. Price 2s.

OLD FRIENDS WITH NEW FACES. Plates. Fcap. 8vo, cloth. Price 2s.

STORY OF A NEEDLE. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 1s. 6d.

WINGS AND STINGS; or, Lessons from Insect Life. With Illustrations. 18mo, cloth. Price 1s.

New Illustrated Edition of

WINGS AND STINGS. Beautifully printed on toned paper, with Six Steel Plates from Designs by HARVEY. Foolsap 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 3s.

T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

ELEGANT GIFT BOOKS.

EVENINGS WITH THE POETS,

And Sketches of their Favourite Scenes. With Six Plates Full Coloured. Foolscap 8vo, cloth, full gilt side and edges. Price 5s.

FOUR-FOOTED FAVOURITES;

Or, Stories about Pets. With Four Steel Plates. Foolscap 8vo, cloth, full gilt side. Price 2s. 6d.

JUVENILE FORGET-ME-NOT.

Edited by Mrs. S. C. HALL. With Four Steel Plates. Foolscap 8vo, cloth, full gilt side. Price 2s. 6d.

GARDEN WALKS WITH THE POETS

With Six Engravings, printed in Colours. 18mo, full gilt side and edges. Price 2s.

THE RIVER JORDAN.

Pictorial and Descriptive. With Gilt Borders round the pages, and Six Illustrations, printed in Oil Colours. Post 8vo. Price 3s.

THE SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

Gilt Borders round the pages, and Six Illustrations in Oil Colours. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 3s.

THE LANGUAGE AND POETRY OF FLOWERS.

New and Elegant Edition. Printed on superfine paper, post 8vo size, with Gilt Borders round the pages, and Six Full-page Illustrations, printed in Colours. Price 3s.

GARDEN FLOWERS.

A Series of Twelve Favourite English Garden Flowers, printed in Colours and Gold, with appropriate Poetry. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

SCOTTISH SONGS.

A Souvenir. A Selection of Favourite Airs, with Pianoforte Accompaniments. With Vignette Engravings and Borders in Gold. Square 16mo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

ELEGANT GIFT BOOKS.

Printed on Superfine Toned Paper, with Gilt Borders round the pages 24mo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 1s. 6d.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

THE PARTING GIFT.

HARP OF JUDAH;

Gems of Sacred Poetry, Original and Selected.

SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE.

With Notes.

T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

BOOKS FOR BOYS. BY R. M. BALLANTYNE.

- MAN ON THE OCEAN.** With Eight Tinted Plates, and numerous Woodcuts. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 5s.
- THE GORILLA HUNTERS.** A Tale of Western Africa. With Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- THE DOG CRUSOE.** A Tale of the Western Prairies. With Coloured Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- THE CORAL ISLAND.** A Tale of the Pacific. With Eight Engravings. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- UNGAVA.** A Tale of Esquimaux Land. With Eight Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- THE YOUNG FUR-TRADERS.** A Tale of the Far North. With Eight fine Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- THE WORLD OF ICE;** or, Adventures in the Polar Regions. With Engravings. Post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 3s. 6d.
- MARTIN RATTLER;** or, A Boy's Adventures in the Forests of Brazil. With Illustrations. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.
-

BOOKS FOR BOYS. BY W. H. J. KINGSTON.

- MY FIRST VOYAGE TO SOUTHERN SEAS.** With Illustrations in Colours. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- ROUND THE WORLD.** A Tale for Boys. Illustrated. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
- OLD JACK.** A Sea Tale. Illustrated. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.
-

BOOKS FOR BOYS. BY J. H. FYFE.

- MERCHANT ENTERPRISE;** or, The History of Commerce. With Eight Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 3s. 6d.
- BRITISH ENTERPRISE BEYOND THE SEAS;** or, The Planting of Our Colonies. Illustrated. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.
- TRIUMPHS OF INVENTION AND DISCOVERY.** With Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

BOOKS FOR THE FAMILY LIBRARY.

LIVES MADE SUBLIME BY FAITH AND WORKS.

By the Rev. ROBERT STEEL, D.D., Author of "Doing Good; or, The Christian in Walks of Usefulness." Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

DOING GOOD ;

Or, The Christian in Walks of Usefulness. Illustrated by Examples. By the Rev. ROBERT STEEL, D.D., Cheltenham. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

GREAT MISSIONARIES.

A Series of Biographies. By the Rev. ANDREW THOMSON, D.D., Edinburgh. Post 8vo, with Frontispiece and Ornamental Title. Price 3s. 6d.

PIONEERS OF THE WORLD'S PROGRESS ;

Or, Biographical Sketches of Illustrious Path-Finders for the Human Race. By the Rev. A. L. SIMPSON. With Steel Engravings. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

THE LIGHT OF HOME.

A Tale for the Times. By Mrs S. E. B. PATERSON, Author of "Dunclian Manse," &c. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 3s. 6d.

LESSONS ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

For the Little Ones at Home. By H. L. L., one of the Authors of "Hymns from the Land of Luther." Foolsap 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 3s. 6d.

FLOWER STORIES AND THEIR LESSONS.

With Four Illustrations. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s.

HEAVENS, EARTH, AND SEA ;

Or, The Hand of God in the Works of Nature. By the Rev. JOHN M. WILSON. With Sixteen Plates, printed in Colours. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.

VOICES OF THE GARDEN, THE WOODS, AND THE FIELDS ;

Or The Teachings of Nature as Seasons Change. With Full-coloured Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.

GLIMPSES OF OCEAN LIFE ;

Or, Rock Pools, and the Lessons they Teach. By JOHN HARPER, F.R.S.S.A., Author of "The Sea-side and Aquarium." With numerous Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.

THE FAIRY TREE ;

Or, Stories from Far and Near. By ITA. With Coloured Frontis piece. Foolsap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s. 6d.

T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

HISTORY AND TRAVEL.

THE LAND AND THE BOOK.

With numerous Illustrations. By W. M. THOMSON, D.D., twenty-five years Missionary in Palestine. Crown 8vo. Price 7s. 6d.

TWENTY-NINE YEARS IN THE WEST INDIES AND CENTRAL

Africa. A Narrative of Missionary Work and Adventure. By the Rev. HOPE M. WADDELL, formerly Missionary at Old Calabar. One volume, crown 8vo, with Illustrations. Price 10s.

KANE'S ARCTIC EXPLORATIONS.

With Eight Steel Plates and numerous Wood Engravings. Crown 8vo. Price 7s. 6d.

HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA.

By HUGH MURRAY, Esq., F.R.S.E. With Continuation to the Close of 1854. Crown 8vo, cloth. Price 6s. 6d.

BARTLETT'S JERUSALEM REVISITED.

With fine Steel Engravings. Royal 8vo, cloth extra, gilt top, bevelled boards. Price 6s.

PICTURES FROM SICILY.

By the Author of "Forty Days in the Desert," &c. With fine Steel Engravings. Royal 8vo, cloth extra. Price 6s.

THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

By the Author of "Forty Days in the Desert," &c. With fine Steel Engravings. Royal 8vo, cloth extra. Price 6s.

THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE SEA.

By Lieutenant MAURY, U.S.N., Superintendent of the National Observatory, Washington. With Thirteen Charts, &c., printed in Colours. Crown 8vo, cloth. Price 5s.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST:

With a Special View to the Delineation of Christian Faith and Life. With Notes, Chronological Tables, Lists of Councils, Examination Questions, and other Illustrative Matter. (From A.D. 1 to A.D. 313.) By the Rev. ISLAY BURNS, M.A., St. Peter's Church, Dundee. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.

WANDERINGS OVER BIBLE LANDS AND SEAS.

By the Author of "Tales and Sketches of the Christian Life," "The Voice of Christian Life in Song," &c. Post 8vo, cloth extra. With Steel Engravings. Price 5s.

THE HISTORY OF INDIA,

From the Earliest Ages to the Fall of the East India Company and the Proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858. By the Rev. ROBERT HUNTER, A.M., formerly Missionary at Nagpore in Central India. Folscap 8vo, cloth. Price 1s. 6d.

SCENES OF TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE IN FOREIGN LANDS—

(South America). By B. B. Illustrated. Folscap 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

T. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

PSALMODY.

CHURCH MUSIC:

A Comprehensive Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, Chants, Anthems, Sanctuses, &c., Harmonized for Four Voices. By ADAM WRIGHT, Birmingham. *Vocal Score*, cloth limp, price 3s. 6d. *Instrumental Edition*, price 7s. 6d. *Sol-fa Notation*, price 2s. 6d.

SONGS OF THE SANCTUARY:

A Collection of Psalms, Scripture Hymns, &c., arranged for Chanting. By JAMES S. GRIFFIN. 12mo, cloth, price 1s. 6d.

BOOK OF PSALMS AND SACRED HARMONIES,

With the Psalms Printed for Expressive Singing. Common Musical Notation, or Tonic Sol-fa Notation. Small 4to, cloth limp, price 2s. 6d.; cloth, gilt edges, price 3s. 6d.

BOOK OF PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SACRED HARMONIES,

With the Psalms and the Hymn Book of the United Presbyterian Church Printed for Expressive Singing. Common Musical Notation, or Tonic Sol-fa Notation. Small 4to, cloth limp, price 4s.; cloth, gilt edges, price 5s.

SCOTTISH PSALMODY.

Common Musical Notation. Square 16mo, cloth limp, price 1s.

SCOTTISH PSALMODY.

On Curwen's Tonic Sol-fa Notation. Oblong 24mo, cloth limp, price 10d.

HYMN MUSIC.

Adapted to all the Peculiar Metres in the United Presbyterian Hymn Book. Designed as a Supplement to the "Scottish Psalmody." Common Musical Notation. Square 16mo, cloth limp, price 1s.

SCOTTISH PSALMODY AND HYMN MUSIC.

Common Musical Notation. In one volume, cloth boards, price 2s.

HYMN MUSIC.


On the Tonic Sol-fa Notation. Oblong 24mo, cloth limp, price 9d.

SCOTTISH PSALMODY AND HYMN MUSIC.

Tonic Sol-fa Notation. In one volume, cloth boards, price 1s. 6d.

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND HYMN TUNE BOOK:

A Collection of Tunes for the "Hymns for Public Worship." Edited by the Committee of the General Assembly on Psalmody. Common Musical Notation. Square 16mo, cloth limp, price 1s.



C. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

BOOKS FOR THE FAMILY LIBRARY.

THE ILLUSTRATED BOOK OF SONGS.

For Children. With numerous Engravings. Edited by H. L. L., one of the Authors of "Hymns from the Land of Luther." Cloth extra, gilt edges, bevelled boards. Price 3s. 6d.

THE WORLD'S BIRTH-DAY.

By the Rev. Professor L. GAUSSEN. With Plates. Foolscap 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

KIND WORDS AWAKEN KIND ECHOES.

Illustrations of the Power of Kindness. Foolscap 8vo. Price 2s.

THE BETTER WAY.

Or, What do I Live for? By Miss RANDALL BALLANTYNE. Foolscap 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

THE FLOWER OF THE FAMILY.

A Tale of Domestic Life. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s.

THE SEVEN LITTLE SISTERS WHO LIVE ON THE ROUND

Ball that Floats in the Air. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 1s. 6d.

OLD ROBIN AND HIS PROVERB.

By Mrs. HENRY F. BROCK. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 1s. 6d.

TRUTH IS ALWAYS BEST;

Or, A Fault Confessed is Half Redressed. By MARY and ELIZABETH KIRBY. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 1s. 6d.

LITTLE LILY'S TRAVELS.

Foolscap 8vo. Price 1s. 6d.

FAVOURITE NARRATIVES FOR THE CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD.

Containing the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain — The Dairyman's Daughter — The Young Cottager, &c. Illustrated. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s. 6d.

WAYSIDE FLOWERS.

By FANNY FORESTER. Foolscap 8vo, cloth. Price 2s. 6d.

FACTS FOR EVERYBODY;

An Encyclopædia of Useful Knowledge. By the Editors of "The Family Friend." Post 8vo, leather back and cloth sides. Price 3s. 6d.

THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE:

Its Vastness and Durability. By MUNGO PONTON, Esq., F.R.S.E. With Ten Plates printed in Colours. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 5s.

C. Nelson and Sons' Publications.

SIXPENNY BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

32mo cloth.

LIVE TO BE USEFUL; or, Annie and her Irish Nurse.
FAITHFUL NICOLETTE. By SARAH A. MYERS.
WHAT IS BETTER THAN GOLD?
THE BABES IN THE BASKET; or, Daph and her Charge.
FANNY BURTON; or, Rome was not Built in a Day.
THE POWER OF TRUTH; or, The Borrowed Bible.
LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER.
NELLIE RUSSELL. A Story for the Young.

Uniform with the above.


BY MISS CATHERINE D. BELL.

THE HEAD OR THE HEART.
LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.
TRUST IN GOD; or, Jenny's Trials.
THE WAY TO BE HAPPY.
WISDOM'S WAYS ARE PLEASANTNESS.
WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

NEW SERIES OF SIXPENNY BOOKS.

Royal 32mo, Magenta Cloth Limp.

THE GIANTS, AND HOW TO FIGHT THEM. By the Rev. RICHARD
NEWTON, D.D.
SUNDAY ALL THE WEEK.
SUNNY FACES, BLESSED HANDS.
LITTLE KITTY'S KNITTING NEEDLES. By the Rev. P. B. POWER.
SOWING AND REAPING. By E. A. ST. OBTM.
FREDDY AND HIS BIBLE TEXTS.
ANNIE LYON; or, The Secret of a Happy Home.
THE ONE MOSS ROSE. By the Rev. P. B. POWER.
LITTLE ALICE'S PALACE; or, The Sunny Heart.
THE MOUNTAIN DAISY.
NOT EASILY PROVOKED; or, How to Learn Patience.





the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has become a major employer in the UK, and its growth has been a major factor in the overall growth of the economy.

The public sector has also become a major employer of women. In 1980, women made up 40% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 50%. This increase in the number of women in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of women in the workforce. The public sector has also become a major employer of young people. In 1980, young people made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with disabilities. In 1980, people with disabilities made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase in the number of people with disabilities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people from ethnic minorities. In 1980, people from ethnic minorities made up 5% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 10%. This increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people from ethnic minorities in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low qualifications. In 1980, people with low qualifications made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low qualifications in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low qualifications in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low incomes. In 1980, people with low incomes made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low incomes in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low incomes in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low skills. In 1980, people with low skills made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low skills in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low skills in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low health. In 1980, people with low health made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low health in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low health in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low education. In 1980, people with low education made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low education in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low education in the workforce.

The public sector has also become a major employer of people with low income. In 1980, people with low income made up 10% of the public sector workforce, and by 1995, this figure had risen to 20%. This increase in the number of people with low income in the public sector has been a major factor in the overall increase in the number of people with low income in the workforce.

